



US006015088A

United States Patent [19]
Parker et al.

[11] **Patent Number:** **6,015,088**
[45] **Date of Patent:** **Jan. 18, 2000**

[54] **DECODING OF REAL TIME VIDEO IMAGING**

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[73] Assignee: Welch Allyn, Inc., Skaneateles Falls, N.Y.

[21] Appl. No.: 08/964,341

[22] Filed: Nov. 4, 1997

Related U.S. Application Data

[60] Provisional application No. 60/030,360, Nov. 5, 1996.

[51] Int. Cl.⁷ **G06K 7/10**

[52] U.S. Cl. **235/462.01; 382/292**

[58] Field of Search **235/462.01, 375, 235/384, 382, 385; 382/183, 291, 292**

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Primary Examiner—Donald Hajec

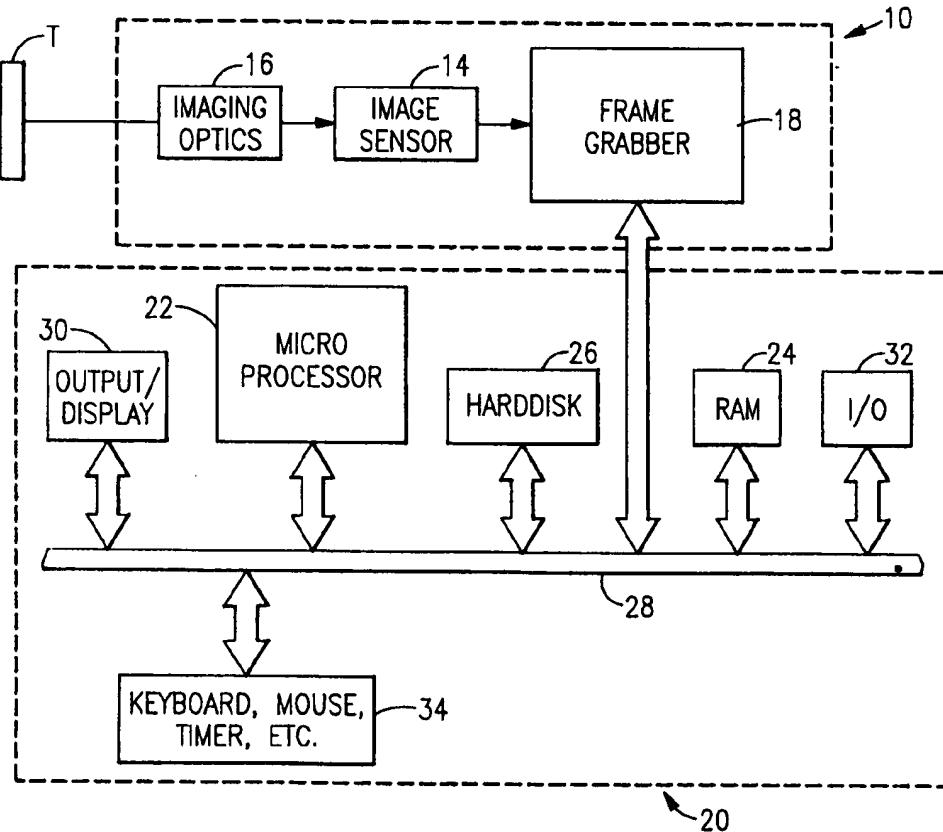
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

A process allows an image capturing apparatus to be integrated with a personal computer to continuously display a video image of the imaging apparatus. Upon proper input by a user, or automatically after a timed interval, a snapshot of the video image is captured. An autodiscrimination process of the captured video image automatically decodes any bar-coded information present in the captured image and outputs the information.

25 Claims, 6 Drawing Sheets



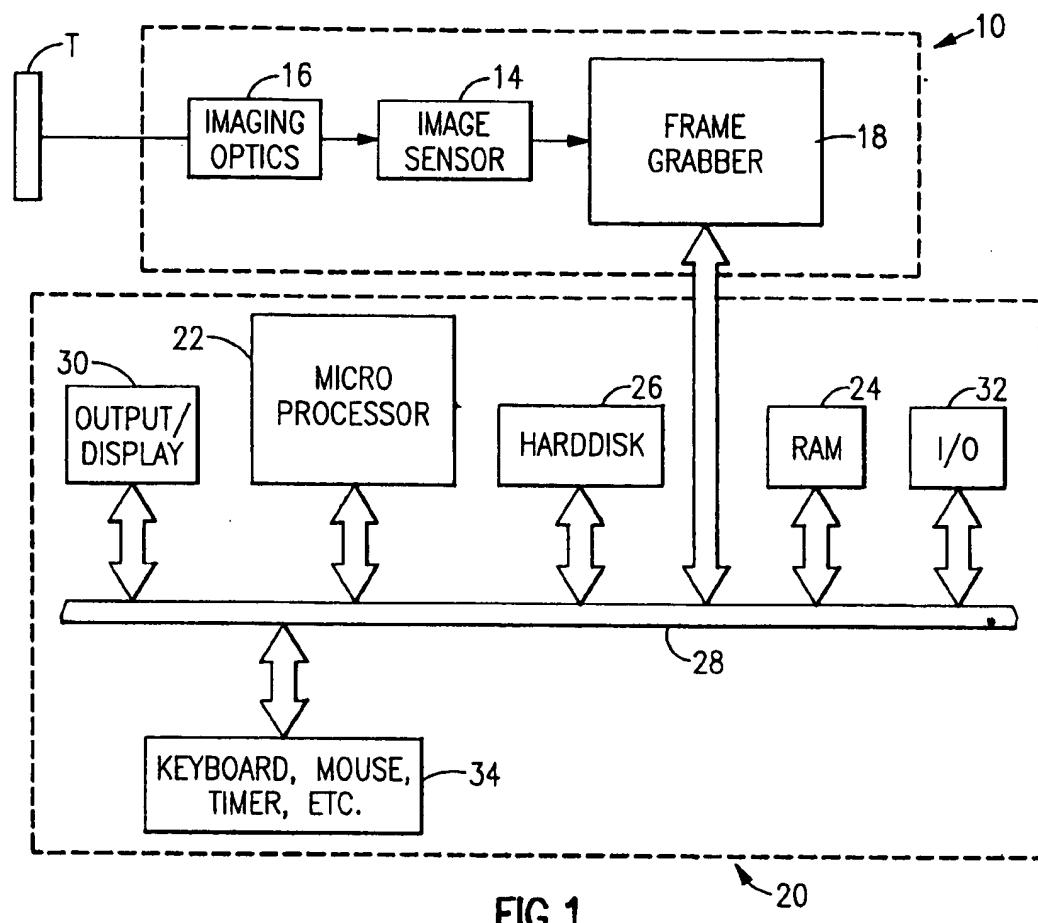


FIG.1

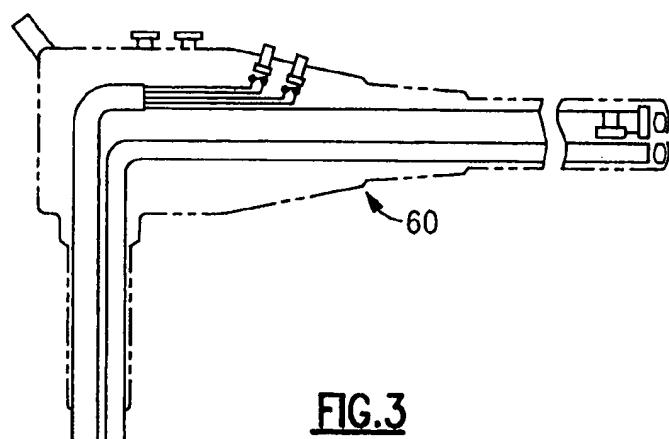


FIG.3

Prior Art

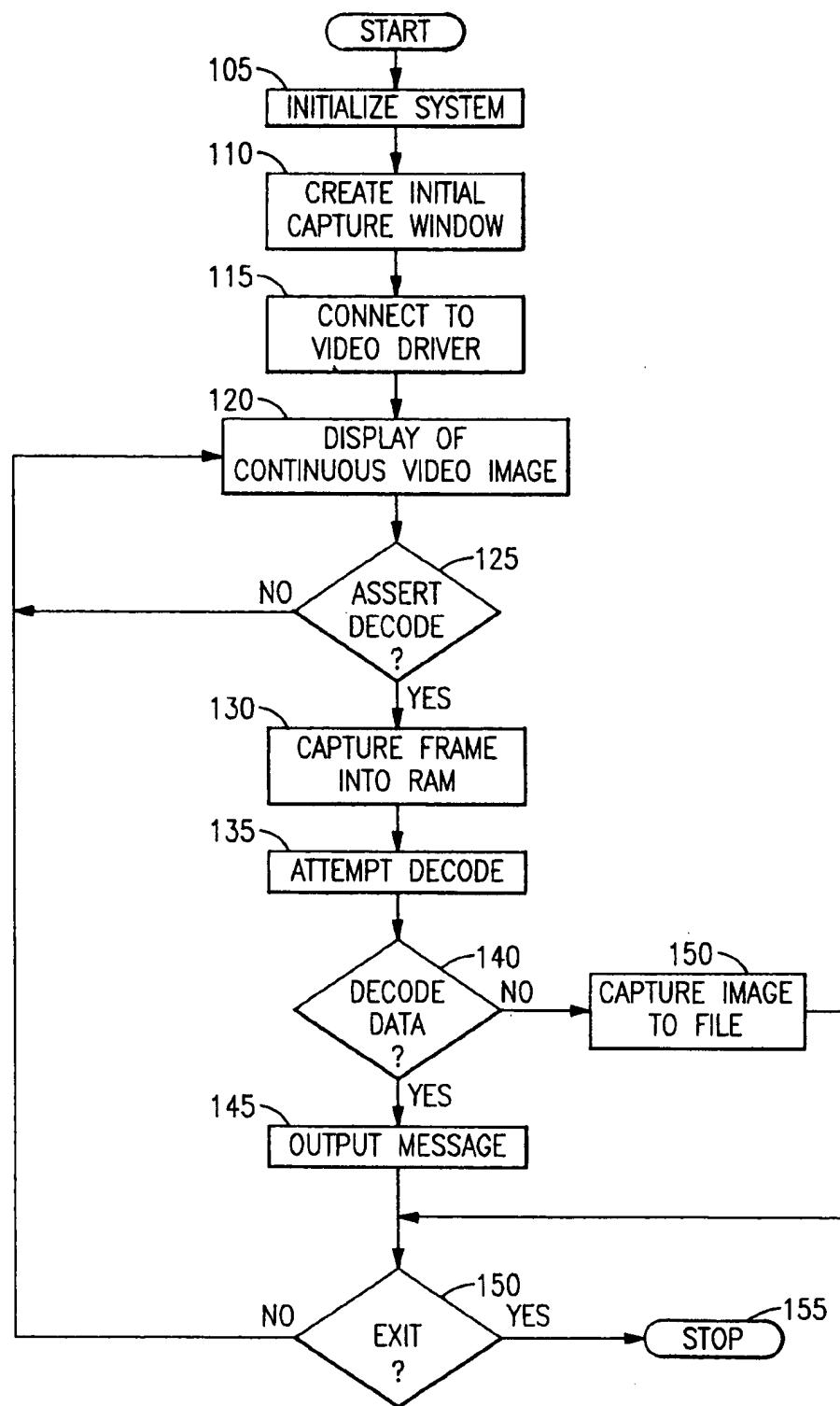


FIG.2

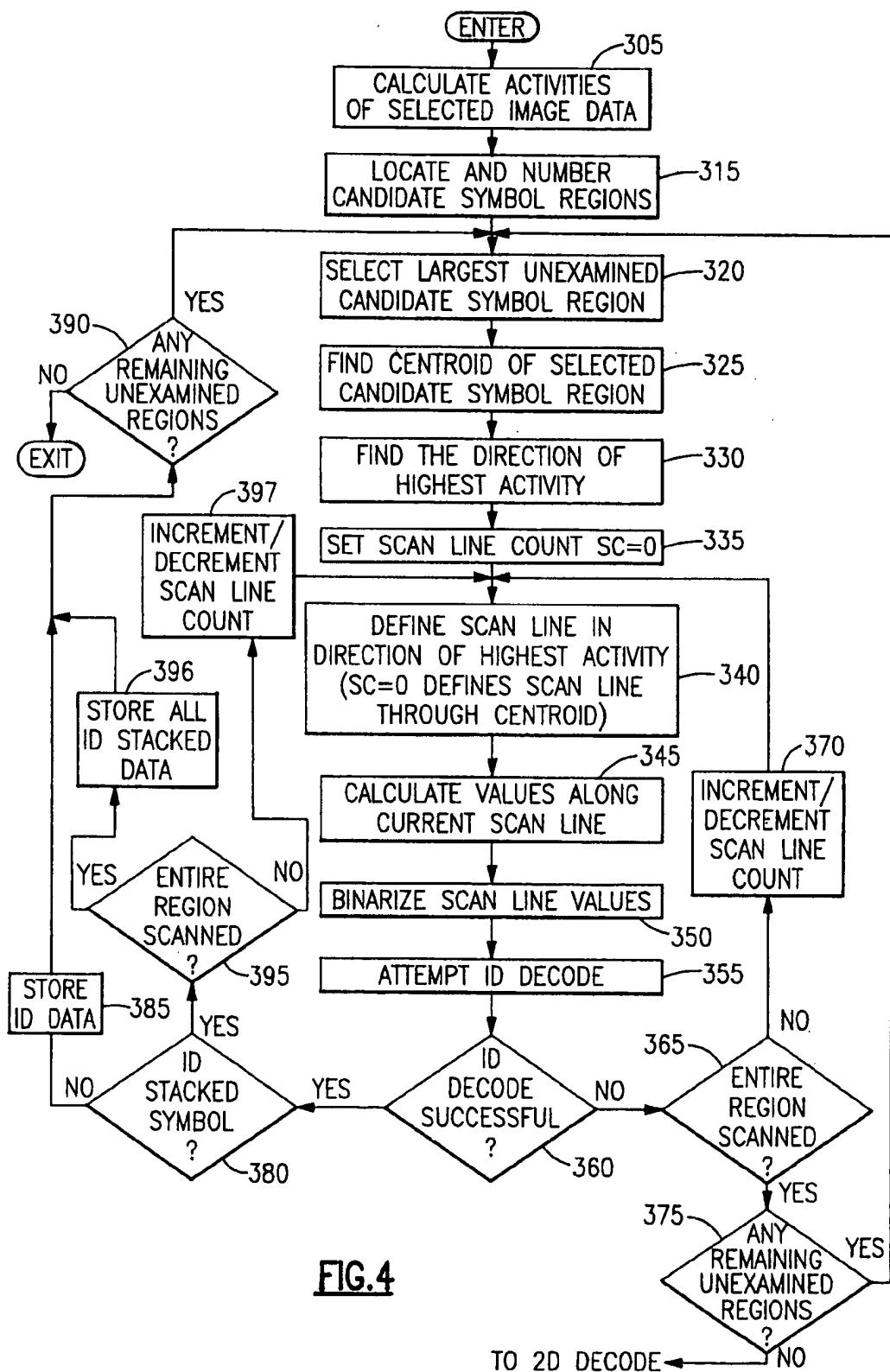
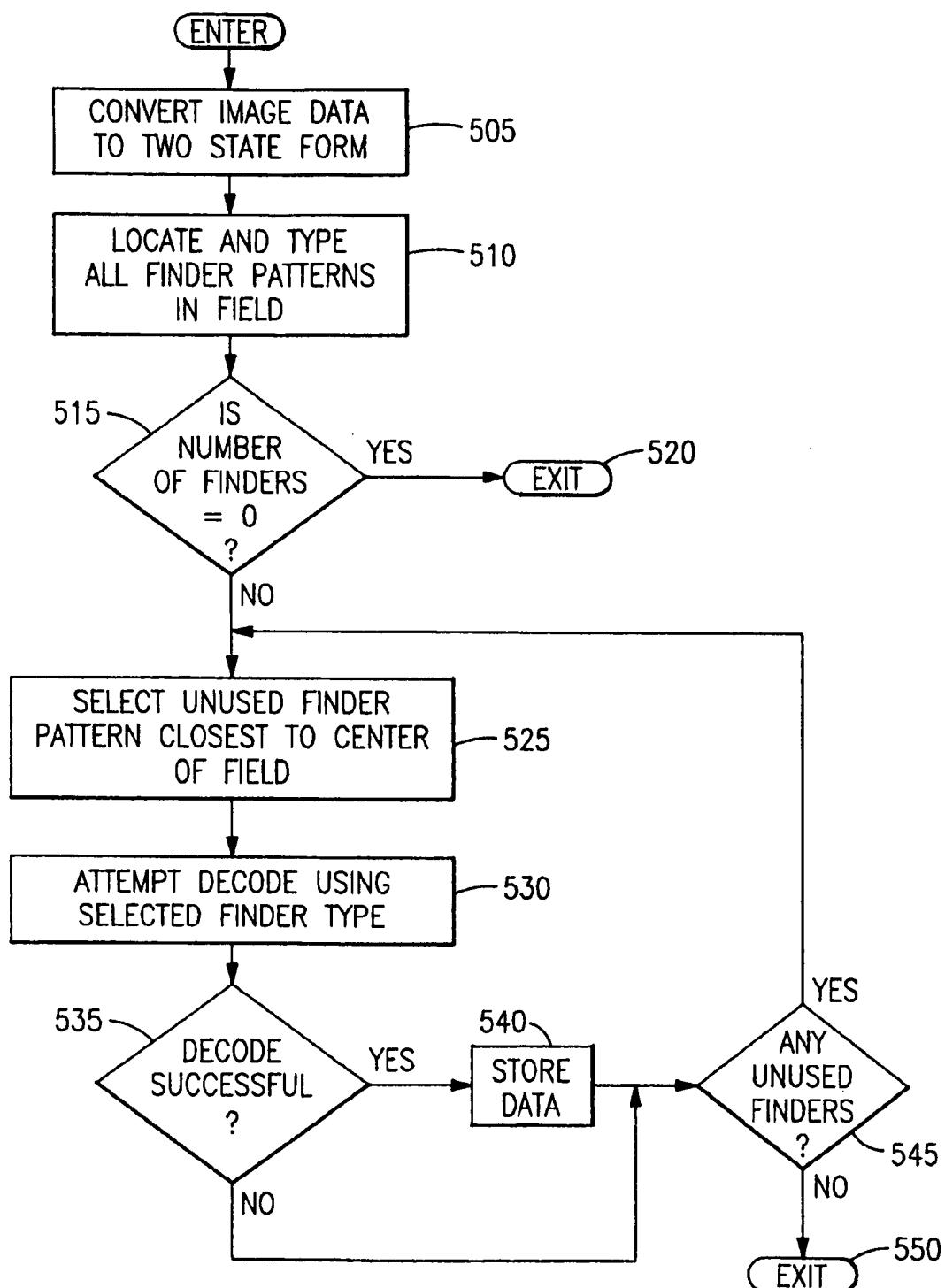


FIG.4

FIG.5

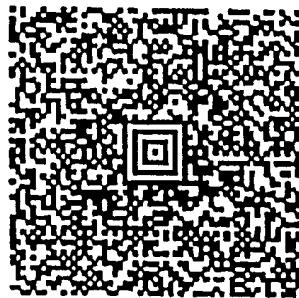


FIG.6

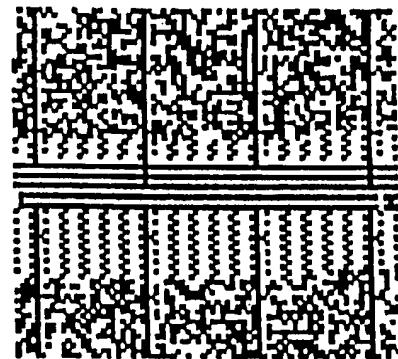


FIG.7

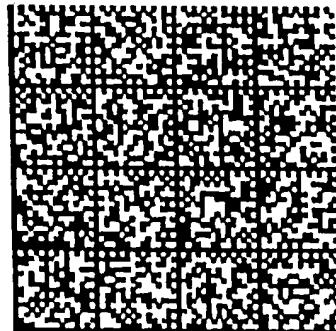


FIG.8

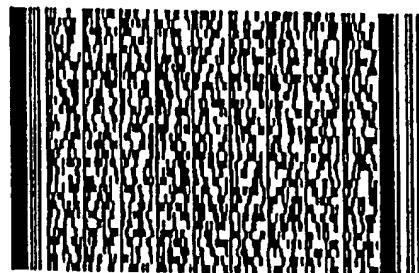
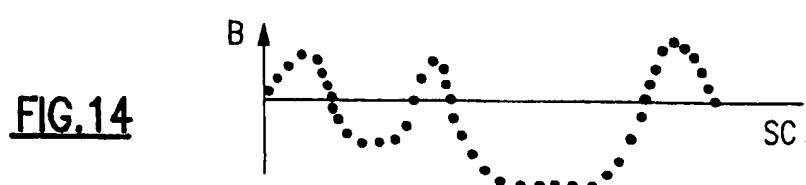
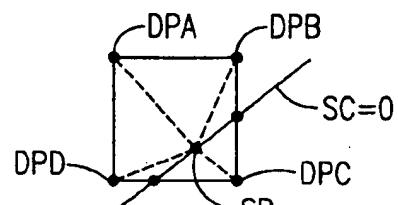
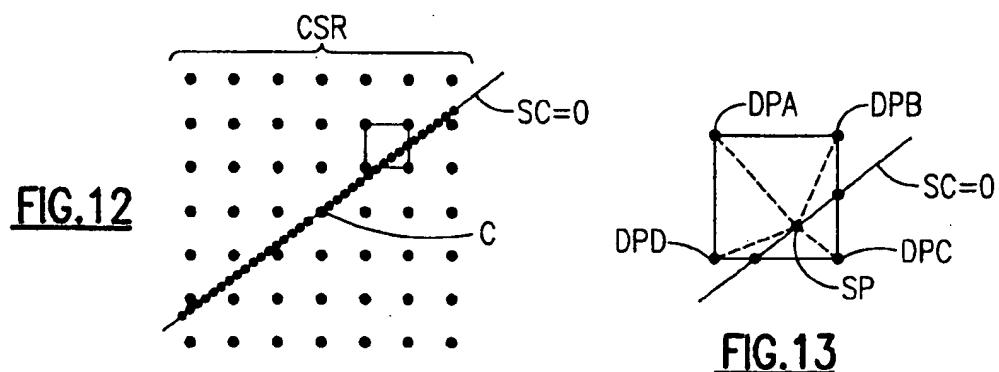
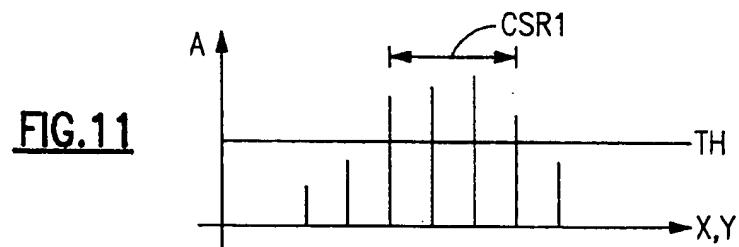
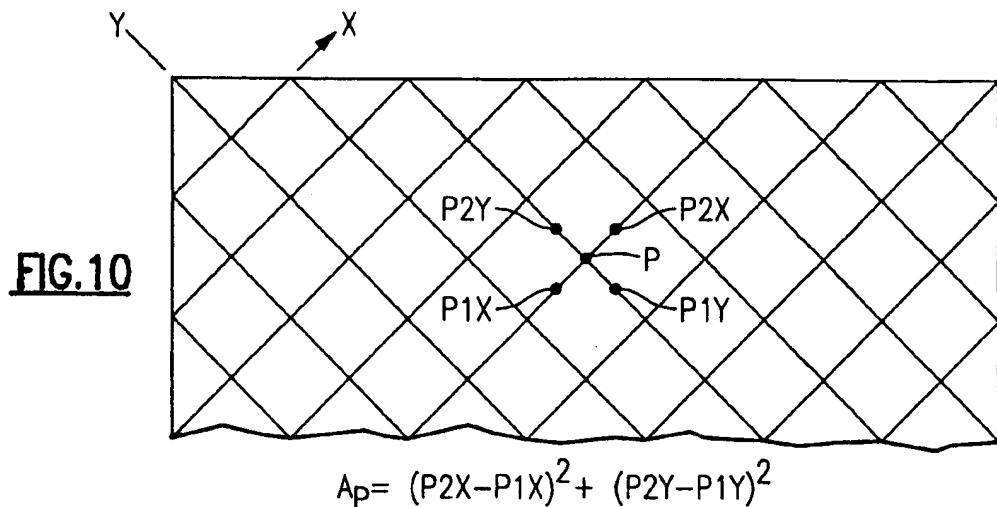


FIG.9



DECODING OF REAL TIME VIDEO IMAGING

This application claims benefit of provisional application 60/030,360, filed Nov. 5, 1996.

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to image capturing apparatus, and more particularly to a method of capturing and decoding bar code information in real time from a continuously displayed video signal of a particular target.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Image capture devices are known in the prior art for allowing diagnostic inspections to be performed, such as for surgical or other medical procedures with minimum human intervention. Such devices include video output for allowing real time images of a target of interest to be viewed. Examples of such devices used for medical purposes are described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,755,873, and 4,651,202, among others, which allow the image to be continuously viewed on a video monitor. Similar devices, such as borescopes, are used for inspection of steam vessels, automotive engines, and other applications extending into the military, industrial and scientific fields.

In addition, bar code readers are also known for reading 1D and 2D bar code symbols, such as bar coded information in supermarkets, etc. A variety of different bar code symbols are now known, for the 1D bar code symbologies a number of them have been developed to allow the encoding of larger amounts of data, including Code 49, as described in U.S. Pat. No. 4,794,239, issued to Allais, and PDF 417, as described in U.S. Pat. No. 5,340,786, issued to Paviudus, et al. In these patents, stacked symbols partition the encoded data into multiple rows, each including a respective 1D bar code pattern, all or most of which must be scanned and decoded, then linked together to form a complete message. Two dimensional (2D) matrix symbologies, have also been developed which offer orientation-free scanning and greater data densities and capacities than their 1D counterparts. 2D matrix codes encode data as dark or light data elements within a regular polygonal matrix, accompanied by graphical finder, orientation and reference structures.

Bar code readers are known which discriminate between the different types of symbologies of each of the above 1D and 2D types. For example, optical readers capable of 1D autodiscrimination are well known in the art. An early example of such a reader is the SCANTEAM™ 3000, manufactured by Welch Allyn, Inc.

Optical readers which are capable of 1D/2D discrimination are less well known in the art, in that 2D symbologies are relatively new innovations. An example of a hand-held reader having such capability is described in copending, commonly assigned U.S. Ser. No. 08/504,643. A stationary 2D image sensor is described in copending, commonly assigned U.S. Ser. No. 08/516,185, each of which is hereby incorporated by reference in their entirety. Most recently, a barcode reader which performs 1D/2D autodiscrimination of a target having multiple symbols is described in copending and commonly assigned U.S. Ser. No. 08/697,914, filed Sep. 3, 1996. The reader captures a field of view and autodiscriminates between the symbols within the captured field of view.

Typically, if a video image obtained with an image sensor and displayed onto a computer monitor contains bar-coded information, the following occurs: First, the image is cap-

tured into a named file saved by the computer, converted to disk or otherwise. The user then must separately load a bar code decoding program such as the 1D/2D program, described above, into the system and load the disk separately as a file for execution by the bar decoding program.

There are a number of problems with this approach. First, if the image is not properly resolved by the digital camera, or other imaging device, then the stored image can not be decoded properly. This means that the user must separately 10 reaim the imaging device, download a new stored image, rename the file, reload the bar code decoding program, and reload the newly stored image as input into the decoding program. Several such iterations might be needed, with each iteration taking a considerable amount of time, and producing frustration and inconvenience for the user.

Furthermore, this situation exacerbates if a target of interest includes widely scattered symbols that are spaced by more than a single field of view, because multiple decoding operations would be required. As noted, each decoding 20 operation would require a separate capture, loading and decoding sequence, as described above. Because of the time required to perform the capture and decoding steps as presently known, efficiency and practicality are each limited.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is a primary object of the present invention to overcome the shortcomings of the prior art.

It is another primary object of the present invention to 30 provide a process which utilizes real-time video obtained from a digital camera, endoscope, or other suitable image capturing device for continuous display and integrates the video capability in a computer to assess and decode any bar code readable information found in the video and display the 35 encoded message, while simultaneously displaying the video image.

It is yet another primary object of the present invention to provide a physician, or other practitioner with an opportunity to alter the presentation of the video image or more 40 preferably to aim the device in order to properly place a bar-code readable symbol or symbols into the field of view of the imaging device and without having to separately upload and download the scanning and decoding programs.

It is another primary object of the invention to allow a 45 real-time captured video image to be stored in memory, such as for archival purposes.

It is another primary object of the present invention to allow a variety of various imaging devices of varying types, such as endoscopes, borescopes, and literally any digital 50 camera capable of providing video input to a PC, to be interchangeably used with the above, irrespective of the types of imaging optics or illumination systems used therein.

It is another primary object of the present invention to provide a system which can automatically and without 55 human intervention capture and decode a video input while allowing the real time image to remain displayed.

Therefore, and according to a preferred aspect of the present invention a process is provided for capturing and decoding bar-code information in real-time from a continuously displayed video signal, comprising the steps of:

aiming an imaging apparatus at a target of interest, said target having optically readable and machine readable information contained thereupon; continually displaying a real time image of said target from said imaging apparatus on a computer video monitor;

selectively capturing an image into the memory of said computer;
decoding said image if said bar-code readable information is contained on said real-time image while maintaining said image on said display; and
outputting the decoded information.

According to a preferred embodiment, a captured image with or without bar-code data can be saved such as for archival purposes.

This application deals with integrating software which allows a personal computer (PC) or other peripheral device to be linked with literally any form of image capturing apparatus, such as an endoscope or other medical or other diagnostic instrument having a solid-state imaging device. A video image from the imaging device is displayed on the PC monitor while the system automatically captures the image, scans the image, and decodes and displays an encoded message, if such information is present.

The device is most useful for physicians or others who use endoscopic or other diagnostic instruments having video capability. The present process allows a real-time video image to be repeatedly and selectively captured to allow automatic decoding and outputting of encoded information. Furthermore, the user can conveniently aim, capture and decode in a single operation.

Other objects, features, and advantages will become apparent from the following Detailed Description of the Invention, when read in combination with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is block diagram of a preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a flow chart of the major process using a bar code reader and in accordance with a preferred aspect of the present invention;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of one embodiment of a bar code reader which is used with the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a flow chart of one embodiment of the 2D portion of the autodiscrimination process according to the invention;

FIG. 5 is a flow chart of one embodiment of the 1D portion of autodiscrimination program of the invention;

FIGS. 6 through 9 show representative bar code symbols of types which may be decoded by the present invention;

FIGS. 10 through 14 are drawings which aid in the understanding of the flow chart of FIG. 4;

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown a block diagram according to a preferred embodiment of the present invention. An imaging assembly 10 is provided for receiving an image of an object T and generating an electrical output signal indicative of the data optically encoded thereon, if any. The imaging assembly 10 may include an image sensor 14, such as a 1D or 2D CCD or CMOS solid state image sensor together with an imaging optics assembly 16 for receiving and focusing an image of the object T onto a substrate of the image sensor 14. Particular assemblies of this type are described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,755,873, and 4,651,202, each of which are incorporated by reference. It will be readily apparent from the description of the invention, however, that literally any device having an internal image sensor is applicable. For purposes of this

application, an electronic endoscope 60, such as described in the '202 reference is shown in FIG. 3.

The imaging device 14 also includes electronics which allow interfacing with a video capture card, also referred to as a frame grabber 18, which interfaces directly with a computer 20. According to this embodiment, the computer 20 is a Compaq Pentium 120 based PC and the frame grabber 18 is a Flashpoint Lite manufactured by Integral Technologies, Inc. These items are each well known in the art and require no further detailed discussion.

The computer includes a microprocessor 22 which is a programmable control device which is able to receive, output and process data in accordance with a stored program maintained within either or both of a read/write random access memory (RAM) 24 and a hard drive 26. The described embodiment preferably refers to a computer having the Microsoft Windows operating system contained therein, though other similar systems can be utilized.

The RAM 24 and the hard drive 26 are both connected to a common bus 28 through which program data, including address data, may be received and transmitted in either direction to any circuitry that is also connected thereto.

Included along the common bus 28 are user inputs, such as a keyboard/ mouse arrangement 34 as well as a video monitor 30 used to output the video signal, as is described in greater detail below.

The overall operation of the system illustrated in FIG. 1, will now be described with reference to the main program represented by the flow chart of FIG. 2.

Referring to FIG. 2, the main program begins with block 105 which includes the activation of the program instructions which can be accomplished by calling up the program from the hard drive 26 and loading the program into the system using the standard Windows commands from either the file manager or otherwise as is known. Upon loading of the program, a set of system parameters defining initial sizes of the frame window for the framegrabber 18, and other software variables, such as the mode of decoding, of triggering, etc are each activated. Each of the above parameters are described in greater detail in the attached source code, attached as microfiche Appendix I, attached hereto, in accordance with 37 CFR §1.96.

In the initial start-up mode, a particular user input is selected as the trigger for the image capture and decode mechanism. According to this embodiment, a designated keyboard key, referred to as a "Hotkey", such as F10, is preset as the trigger. Alternately, the user can be prompted as described in greater detail according to the source code, see microfiche Appendix I, to utilize other keys on the keyboard or the mouse button as the trigger. Another alternate mode can be used in which a snapshot can be taken automatically by the processor 22 after a predetermined time interval has elapsed, e.g. 2 seconds. Similarly, the initial startup mode provides for outputting of any decoded messages to the monitor 30 after all of the symbols found have been decoded, such as adjacent the video image in a Windows message box. Alternate outputting modes, however, are contemplated allowing for several options for the user, such as saving to a ASCII file, sending the messages to a host processor, a keyboard buffer, or other convenient means.

The imaging assembly 10, using the imaging optics 16 focusses an image of the target T onto the image sensor 14 as is commonly known. The image of the target is then converted into analog electrical signals which are transmitted to the frame grabber 18 having circuitry to perform the analog to digital conversion to provide an array of pixels as

defined by default parameters which is displayed as a continuous video signal in the monitor 30 per block 120. Details relating to the above are generally known to those of skill in the field, and require no further elaboration herein. The frame grabber 18 is preferably supplied as an input card to the computer 20 and serves as the video driver, though the frame grabber 18 can also be more than one driver, also as is commonly known.

Referring to the flow chart of FIG. 2, and after the video image of the target has been supplied by the image sensor to the monitor 30 per block 120, the user per block 125 is ready to capture an instantaneous image (hereinafter referred to as a "snapshot") for storage into RAM 24 per block 130 and for attempting to decode any symbols present in the field of view per block 135. As noted above, the initial mode contemplates the user must elect the capture of a snapshot using the Hotkey, F10, to execute block 125, though as also noted above, a number of alternate modes are available by which the user or the processor 22 may capture a snapshot. Regardless of the mode selected, the user aims the image sensor 16 at the object T until a resolved image is displayed in the monitor 30. Upon depression of the "hotkey", the processor 22 proceeds automatically to blocks 130 and 135, which call for the capture and attempt to decode an instantaneous image of the signal, referred to hereafter as a "snapshot", referring to an instantaneous digital signal which is stored into RAM. In passing, it should be noted that the acquisition of the snapshot of the video image does not impact the video image which remains displayed on the monitor, as a real time image.

Image capture of the snapshot to RAM 24 automatically causes the processor 22 to attempt to decode the snapshot as shown in the blocks 130, 135 in FIG. 2. This decoding involves a discrimination process, depending on whether any 1D and or 2D symbols are present in the field of view. This autodiscrimination process is described in greater detail below. If the decoding is successful, per the decision block 140, the messages are outputted per block 145. If the attempt to decode the messages is unsuccessful, the user may opt to recapture the video signal per block 125, and block 145 is bypassed. The user may alternately elect to store the captured image per block 150, into the hard disk 26.

Generally speaking, the flow chart of FIG. 4 illustrates the 1D portion of a complete 1D/2D autodiscrimination process, while FIG. 5 illustrates the 2D portion of the complete 1D/2D autodiscrimination process.

Turning first to the flow chart of FIG. 4, there is shown the 1D portion of the autodiscrimination process, which operates on the image data stored in RAM 24. The image data will comprise a gray scale representation of the 2D image formed on the image sensor.

On encountering block 305, the processor 22 is directed to calculate the "activities" of selected image data elements. The "activity" of a point P as used herein comprises a measure of the rate of change of the image data over a small two dimensional portion of the region surrounding point P. This activity is preferably calculated along any two arbitrarily selected directions which are mutually perpendicular to one another, as shown by the lines parallel to directions X and Y of FIG. 10. One example of an activity calculation is that which is based on the squares of the gray scale differences of two pairs of points P1X-P2X and P1Y-P2Y that are centered on point P, as shown in FIG. 10. Two mutually independent directions are used because the orientation of the symbol is unknown and because a high activity level that by chance is difficult to detect in a first

direction will be readily detectable in a second direction perpendicular to the first direction.

Preferably, an activity profile of the stored image data is constructed on the basis of only a selected, relatively small number of image data elements that are distributed across the field of view that corresponds to the stored image data. Using a relatively small number of data elements is desirable to increase the speed at which the symbol can be imaged. These selected points may be selected as the points which lie at the intersections of an X-Y sampling grid such as that shown in FIG. 10. The spacing of the lines defining this grid is not critical to the present invention, but does affect the resolution with which the activity profile of the image can be measured.

When the processor 22 has determined the activities of the selected data points, it is directed to block 315, which causes it to look for candidate bar code symbols by identifying regions of high activity. This is conveniently done by determining those sets of image data points having activities which exceed a predetermined threshold value. A simplified, one-dimensional representation of this step is illustrated in FIG. 11, wherein those image data points having an activity that exceed a threshold value TH are labeled as a candidate symbol region CSR1.

In embodiments which are adapted to find and decode all of the symbols that occur in fields of view that include a plurality of bar code symbols, the result is the identification of a plurality of candidate symbol regions (CSRs), any one or more of which may be a bar code symbol. Whether or not they are bar code symbols is determined on the basis of whether they are decodable. According to this embodiment, the processor is instructed to select one of the CSRs according to a suitable selection rule, such as the largest CSR first, the CSR nearest the center of the field of view first, the CSR with the highest total activity first, etc., and then attempt to decode each of the symbols, to attempt to decode the first symbol and stop, depending on whether or not the symbol has been decoded.

Once all of the CSRs have been located, the processor 22 is directed to block 320 which, calls for the processor to select the largest (or most centrally located) as yet unexamined CSR for further processing, and then to proceed to block 325. This latter block then causes the processor 22 to find the centroid or the center of gravity of that CSR, before proceeding to block 330. An example of such a centroid is labeled C in FIG. 12. Because the steps involved in finding a centroid or center of gravity are well known, they will not be described in any detail herein.

On encountering block 330, the processor 22 is directed to examine the selected CSR by defining exploratory scan lines therethrough, determining the activity profile of the CSR along those scan lines, and selecting the scan line having the highest total activity. In the case of a 1D bar code symbol, this will be the direction most nearly perpendicular to the direction most nearly perpendicular to the direction of the bars, i.e., the optimum reading direction for a 1D symbol.

On exiting block 330, the processor 22 encounters blocks 335 and 340. The first of these blocks 335 scans a scan line counter to zero; the second block 340 defines an initial working scan line through the centroid in the previously determined direction of highest activity. The result of this operation is the definition, in the image data space representation of the CSR, of a working scan line, such as SC=0 in FIG. 12.

Once the initial scan line has been defined, the processor 22 is directed to block 345 to calculate, by interpolation

from the image data of the CSR, the values of the sampling points that lie along this scan line. This means that, for each sampling point on the initial scan line, the processor 22 will calculate what brightness the sampling point would have if its brightness were calculated on the basis of the weighted brightness contributions of the four nearest brightness points of the CSR. These contributions are illustrated by the dotted lines which join the sample point SP of FIG. 13 to the four nearest image data points DPA-DPD. So long as these sampling points are more closely spaced than the image data points, this interpolation procedure will be performed on a subpixel basis, and this will produce a useably accurate representation of the image data along the scan line. The result of the subpixel interpolation of the sampling points on a representative scan line of this type is shown in FIG. 14. Because the particulars of the subpixel interpolation process are known to those skilled in the art, this process will not be further described herein.

Once the above-described scan line data has been calculated, the processor 22 is directed to block 350, which calls for it to binarize the scan line data, i.e., convert it to a two-state representation of the data which can be processed as a candidate for 1D decoding. One such representation is commonly known as a timer count representation. One particularly advantageous procedure for accomplishing this binarization process is disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,586,960, which is hereby incorporated by reference.

On exiting block 350, the processor 22 will be in possession of a potentially decodable two-state 1D representation of the CSR. It then attempts to decode this representation, as called for by block 355. This attempted decoding will comprise the trial application to the representation of one 1D decoding program after another until the latter is either decoded or determined to be undecodable. Because decoding procedures of the latter type are known to those skilled in the art, they will not be discussed in any further detail.

As the 1D autodiscrimination process is completed, the processor 22 is directed to decision block 360 which causes it to continue along one of two different paths, depending on whether or not decoding was successful. If the decoding was not successful, the processor 22 will be caused to loop back to block 340, via blocks 365 and 370, where it will be caused to generate a new scan line SC=0, but that passes either above or below centroid C. This looping back step may be repeated many times, depending on the "spacing" of the new scan lines, until the entire CSR has been examined for decodable 1D data. If the entire CSR has been scanned and there has been no successful decode, the processor 22 is directed to exit the above-described loop via block 375. As used herein, the term "parallel" is broadly used to refer to scan lines or paths which are similarly distorted (e.g. curvilinear) as a result of foreshortening effects or as a result of being imaged from a non-planar surface. Since compensating for such distorting effects is known, as indicated, for example, by U.S. Pat. No. 5,396,054, it will not be discussed in further detail.

Block 375 serves to direct the processor 22 back to block 320 to repeat the above-described selection, scanning and binarizing steps for the next unexamined CSR, if one is present. If another CSR is not present, or if the processor's program calls for an attempt to decode only one CSR, block 375 causes the processor 22 to exit the flow chart of FIG. 4 to begin an attempt to decode the then current set of image data as a 2D symbol, in accordance with the flow chart of FIG. 5. If other CSRs are present, block 375 directs the processor 22 back to block 320 to repeat the selection, scanning and binarizing process to the next CSR, and the

next, and so on, until there is either a successful decode (block 360) or all of the CSRs have been examined (block 375).

If the processing of the first CSR has resulted in a successful decode, block 360 directs the processor 22 to block 380, which causes it to determine whether the decoded data indicates that the CSR contains a 1D stacked symbol, such as a PDF417 symbol. One example of such a symbol is shown in FIG. 9. If it is not, i.e., if the decoded symbol includes only a single row of bars, the 1D data is stored for later outputting in accordance with block 145 of the main program of FIG. 2, as called for by block 385. Alternately, the data may be output immediately and block 145 later skipped over. Then, if there are no remaining unexamined CSRs, the processor is directed to exit the flow chart of FIG. 4 via block 390. If, however, there are CSRs remaining, block 390 will direct the processor back to block 320 to begin processing the next CSR, and the next, and so on until all CSRs have been examined and decoded (block 390) or examined and found to be undecodable (block 375).

If, on encountering block 380, the decoded data indicates that the CSR contains a 1D stacked symbol, the above-described processing is modified by providing for the repetition of the scanning-digitizing process, beginning with block 340. This is accomplished by blocks 395, 396, and 397 in a manner that will be apparent to those skilled in the art. Significantly, by beginning the repeating of the process at block 340, all additional scan lines defined via the latter path will be parallel to the first decodable scan line, as required by a 1D stacked symbol, at least in the broad sense discussed earlier.

In view of the foregoing, it will be seen that, depending on the number of CSRs present, the flow chart will cause all 1D symbols in the image data to either be decoded or found to be undecodable before directing the processor 22 to exit the same.

The 2D autodiscrimination flow chart of FIG. 5 may be processed after the processing of the 1D autodiscrimination flow chart of FIG. 4 has been completed. It may also be processed without the flow chart of FIG. 4 having been processed, i.e., the 1D portion of the 1D/2D autodiscrimination process may be skipped or by passed. (In principle, the steps of the 2D portion of the 1D/2D discrimination process (FIG. 5) may also be processed before the 1D portion thereof (FIG. 4). Such arrangements are well within the intended scope of the present invention.

Referring to FIG. 5, there is shown a flow chart of the 2D portion of the 1D/2D autodiscrimination process. When the flow chart of FIG. 5 is entered, the image data that is stored in RAM 24 is the same as that which would be stored therein if the flow chart of FIG. 4 were being entered. This data will comprise an array of 8-bit gray scale image data elements produced by the image sensor 16 and its associated signal and processing and A/D converter circuits contained in the framegrabber 18.

The flow chart of FIG. 5 begins with a block 505, which directs the processor 22 to convert the gray image data representation stored in RAM 24 into a two-state or binarized representation of the same data. This may be accomplished in generally the same manner described earlier in connection with FIG. 11, i.e., by comparing these gray scale values to a threshold value and categorizing these values as 1s or 0s, depending on whether they exceed that threshold value.

Once the image data has been binarized, the processor 22 continues on to block 510, which causes it to identify and

locate all of the 2D finder patterns that appear in the field of view of the image data. This is preferably accomplished by examining all of the candidate 2D finder patterns (CFPs) that are present and identifying them by type, i.e., identifying whether or not they are bulls eye type finder patterns, waistband type finder patterns or peripheral type finder patterns. An example of a bulls eye type finder pattern is shown in the central portion of the 2D bar code symbol of FIG. 6, which symbol encodes data in accordance with a 2D matrix symbology named "Aztec". An example of a waistband type finder pattern is shown in the middle portion of the 2D bar code symbol of FIG. 7, which symbol encodes data in accordance with a 2D matrix symbology named "Code One". An example of a peripheral type finder pattern is shown in the left and lower edges of the 2D bar code symbol of FIG. 8, which symbol encodes data in accordance with a 2D matrix symbology known as "Data Matrix". The finder identification processing is performed by applying to each CFP, in turn, a series of finder pattern finding algorithms of the type associated with each of the major types of finder patterns. Since such finder finding algorithms are known for finders of the waistband and peripheral types, these algorithms will not be discussed in further detail. One example of a finder finding algorithm for a waistband type finder may be found, for example, in "Uniform Symbology Specification Code One", published by AIM/U.S.A. Technology Group. Finder finding algorithms for bulls eye type finders that include concentric rings, (e.g. MaxiCode) are also known and therefore will also not be described in further detail.

Particularly advantageous for purposes of this embodiment, is a bulls eye finder finding algorithm of the type that may be used both with 2D symbologies, such as MaxiCode, that have bulls eye finder patterns that include concentric rings and with 2D symbologies, such as Aztec, that have bulls eye finder patterns which include concentric polygons. A finder finding algorithm of the latter type is described in copending and commonly assigned U.S. Ser. No. 08/504,643, which has been incorporated herein by reference. The Aztec 2D bar code symbology itself is fully described in U.S. Ser. No. 08/441,446, which has also been incorporated by reference.

Once all of the finder patterns have been located and their types have been determined, the processor 22 is directed to decision block 515. This block affords the processor an opportunity to exit the flow chart of FIG. 5, via exit block 45 545, if no 2D finder patterns could be found and typed. This block speeds up the execution of the program by skipping over decoding operations which have no hope of success without their associated finder pattern.

If a finder pattern has been found and typed, the processor 22 is directed to block 525. This block causes the processor 22 to select for decoding the bar code symbol whose finder is closest to the center of field of view of the image data. Optionally, the processor may be instructed to find the largest 2D bar code symbol that uses a particular 2D symbology or the 2D bar code symbol using a particular 2D symbology which is closest to the center of the field of view of the image data. Once this selection is made, the processor attempts to decode that symbol, as called for block 530. If this decoding attempt is successful, as determined by decision block 535, the resulting data may be stored for outputting in accordance with block 135 of the main program of FIG. 2, as called for by block 540. Alternately, the decoded data may be outputted immediately and block 135 later skipped over. If the decoding attempt is not successful, however, block 540 is skipped, and the processor 22 is directed to decision block 545.

Block 545 will direct the processor 22 back to block 525 to process the next 2D symbol, i.e., the symbol whose CFR is next closest to the center of the field of view. The above-described attempted decoding and storing (or outputting) steps will then be repeated, one CFR after another, until there are no more symbols which have usable finder data patterns. Finally, when all symbols having usable finder patterns have either been decoded or found to be undecodable, the processor will exit the flow chart of FIG. 5, via block 550, to return to the main program of FIG. 2.

All of the decoded messages are then outputted to the monitor 30, and the entire output is displayed. According to this embodiment, the contents of each of the bar code messages are output to the WINDOWS message box, though other alternatives are possible.

The invention has been described with reference to a specific embodiment, but it will be readily apparent that other similar embodiments can be utilized to provide decoding and outputting of a real time video signal and as covered by the accompanying claims.

We claim:

1. A process for capturing and decoding bar-code information in real time from a continuously displayed image video signal, comprising the steps of:
 aiming an imaging apparatus at a target of interest, said target having at least one of optically readable and bar coded information contained thereupon;
 continually displaying a real time image of said target from said imaging apparatus;
 selectively capturing and storing an instantaneous image of said target into the memory of a computer;
 determining if bar-coded information is present in said stored image;
 decoding bar-code information if bar-code readable information is contained on said instantaneous stored image while maintaining the display of said real-time image;
 and
 outputting the decoded bar-coded information.

2. A process as recited in claim 1, wherein said selective capturing step is performed automatically after a predetermined time interval.

3. A process as recited in claim 1, wherein said capturing step is selectively performed by input supplied through input means linked to said imaging apparatus.

4. A process as recited in claim 3, wherein said input means is a keyboard.

5. A process as recited in claim 3, wherein said input means is a mouse.

6. A process as recited in claim 3, wherein said input means is a signal from one of at least one of an external, remote and host device.

7. A process as recited in claim 1, including the step of outputting said decoded information adjacent said real-time displayed image.

8. A process as recited in claim 1, including the step of outputting said decoded information to a computer file.

9. A process as recited in claim 1, including the step of outputting said decoded information to a computer keyboard buffer.

10. A process as recited in claim 1, including the step of outputting wherein said decoded information to a pop-up dialogue box.

11. A process as recited in claim 1, including the step of outputting said decoded information to an application's clipboard.

12. A process as recited in claim 1, including the step of integrating said process with an external software application and outputting said decoded information to said application.

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13. A process as recited in claim 1, including the step of storing captured images in which at least some of said images include bar code information.

14. A process for capturing and decoding bar-coded information in real time from a continuously displayed video signal of a target of interest, said process comprising the steps of:

aiming an imaging apparatus at a target of interest;
 continually displaying a real time image of said target obtained from said imaging apparatus;
 selectively capturing an instantaneous displayed image of said target and storing said image into computer memory;
 determining if bar-coded information is present in said captured and stored image; 15
 decoding all bar-coded information present in said captured and stored image while continually displaying said real time image of said target; and
 outputting the decoded bar-code information onto said real time displayed image. 20

15. A process as recited in claim 14, wherein said selective capturing step further includes the step of automatically capturing said instantaneous image after a predetermined time interval. 25

16. A process as recited in claim 14, wherein said target contains an indeterminate number of bar-coded segments disposed indiscriminately throughout, said process including the further steps of:

identifying all bar-coded information in the field of view of said captured image;
 decoding all bar-coded information segments found in said captured image; and
 outputting the decoded bar-coded information of each segment onto said real-time displayed image, wherein the bar-coded information can include distinct 1D and 2D symbologies. 35

17. A process as recited in claim 14, wherein said capturing step includes the step of selectively inputting a capture signal to said imaging apparatus. 40

18. A process as recited in claim 14, including the step of outputting said decoded information to a computer file.

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19. A process as recited in claim 14, including the step of outputting said decoded information to a pop-up dialogue box which is displayed.

20. A process as recited in claim 14, including the step of additionally storing said captured images and decoded bar-coded information into memory after said outputting step. 5

21. A process as recited in claim 20, wherein said storing step includes the storing of images regardless of whether bar-coded information has been determined during said determining step. 10

22. Apparatus for capturing and decoding bar-coded information from a target of interest comprising:

imaging means for imaging a target of interest, said target having at least one of optically readable and bar-coded information contained therein;
 processing means for processing an imaged target;
 display means for continually displaying a real-time image of said target from said imaging and processing means;
 image capture means for selectively capturing at least one image displayed by said display means;
 scanning means for scanning said at least one captured image and for determining the presence of bar-coded information in the field of view of said at least one captured image;
 decoding means for decoding any bar-coded information detected by said scanning means; and
 output means for outputting the decoded bar-coded information to said display means. 20

23. Apparatus as recited in claim 22, including discrimination means for discriminating the type of bar-coded information present in said at least one captured image. 25

24. Apparatus as recited in claim 22, including input means connected to said image capture means for inputting a signal to operate said scanning means and said decoding means when an image is captured. 30

25. Apparatus as recited in claim 22, including storage means for selectively storing images captured by said image capture means regardless of whether bar-coded information is present. 35 40

* * * * *

US-PAT-NO: 5706290

DOCUMENT-IDENTIFIER: US 5706290 A

TITLE: Method and apparatus including
system architecture for
multimedia communication

----- KWIC -----

Detailed Description Text - DETX (44):

When line conditions degrade, the analog front end 514 will become aware of the degradation as a result of incoming frame synchronous signal 570. Analog front end 514 will then notify the digital signal processor modem 516 and host processor 218. Host processor 218 will then switch from a standard operation to an exception operation mode. Host processor 218 has three options to lower the bit rate in order to accommodate and correct the degradation. Option 1 would be for the host processor 218 to notify the pixel processor 206 and select a coarser quantization level 572. Option 2 would be to drop the frame update rate and increase the interpolation rate 574. Option 3 would be to drop from CIF to QCIF 576. When the error processor 526 detects more than two single bit errors, the error processor 526 will notify the pixel processor 206 and host processor 218. Host processor 218 again has two options. Either pixel processor 206 can request for an retransmission or host processor 218 can delete the complete macro block 477 and wait until the next macro block is sent. Meanwhile host processor 218 will send the old macro block 308 from the frame memory 214 and use it to update the display.



US006424677B1

(12) **United States Patent**
Moeller et al.

(10) Patent No.: **US 6,424,677 B1**
(45) Date of Patent: **Jul. 23, 2002**

(54) **VIDEO/AUDIO PROCESSING SYSTEM PROVIDING REAL TIME PROGRAM DURATION ALTERATION**

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(*) Notice: Subject to any disclaimer, the term of this patent is extended or adjusted under 35 U.S.C. 154(b) by 0 days.

(21) Appl. No.: **09/470,145**

(22) Filed: **Dec. 22, 1999**

Related U.S. Application Data

(62) Division of application No. 09/426,844, filed on Oct. 26, 1999, which is a division of application No. 08/552,357, filed on Nov. 2, 1995, now Pat. No. 5,995,153.

(51) Int. Cl.⁷ **H04N 7/12**

(52) U.S. Cl. **375/240.26; 348/439; 386/54; 386/96**

(58) Field of Search **375/240.26; 348/6-10, 348/390, 439; 386/4, 52, 54, 55, 64, 96, 101, 125; H04N 7/12**

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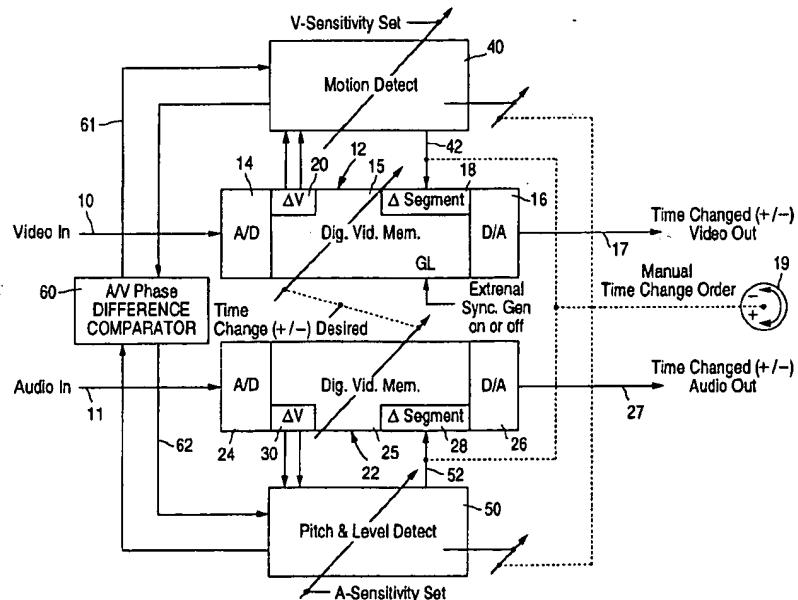
Primary Examiner—Young Lee

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ABSTRACT

The running real time length of combined video and audio signal programs is shortened or lengthened by deleting or repeating individual fields or frames and corresponding amounts of audio segments. The video and audio portions of the programming material are separated and subjected to processing through a pair of program time changing units. The video portion is processed by deleting individual fields or frames on a manual, periodic or automatic basis. Manual deletion is done by an operator observing the program material on a monitor. Periodic deletion is performed automatically after the operator specifies the total amount of time (or number of fields or frames) to be deleted, with every *i*th frame or field deleted regardless of content. Automatic deletion is done in a fashion similar to periodic deletion, but the fields or frames are examined and are deleted on the basis of the amount of between frame motion. Audio segment deletion is done either manually, periodically or automatically, and the audio segments removed need not match the deleted frame video, but may be taken from different frames, so long as the total time length of the deleted audio segments equals the total time of the deleted video frames, and also provided that the differential delay between the processed video and processed audio does not exceed the lip sync criterion. A pause function disables the deletion or insertion process for program materials which may not be altered in any way.

6 Claims, 2 Drawing Sheets



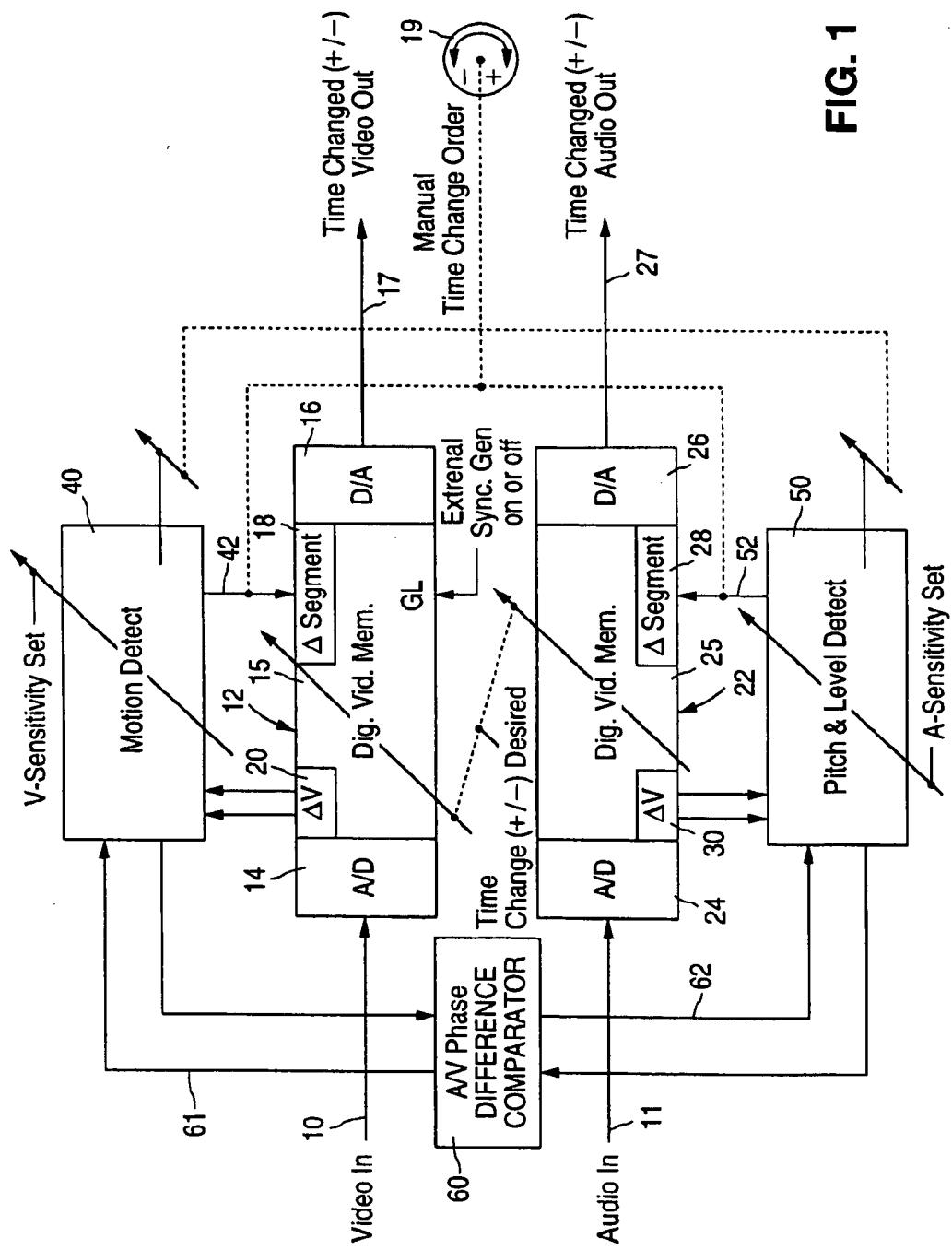


FIG. 1

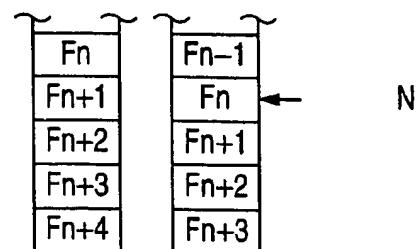
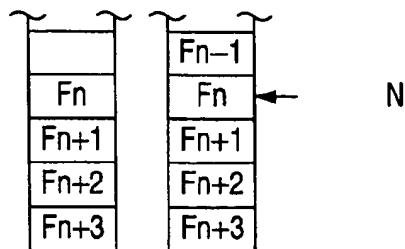
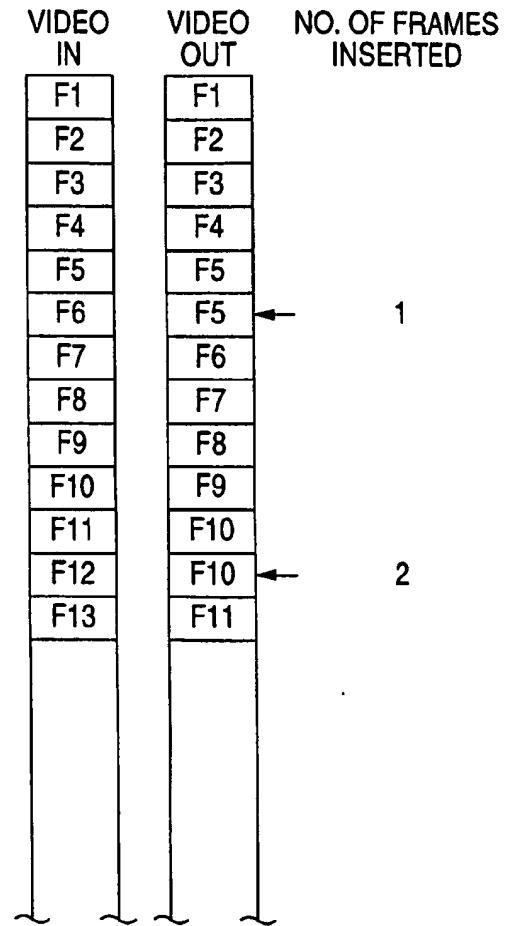
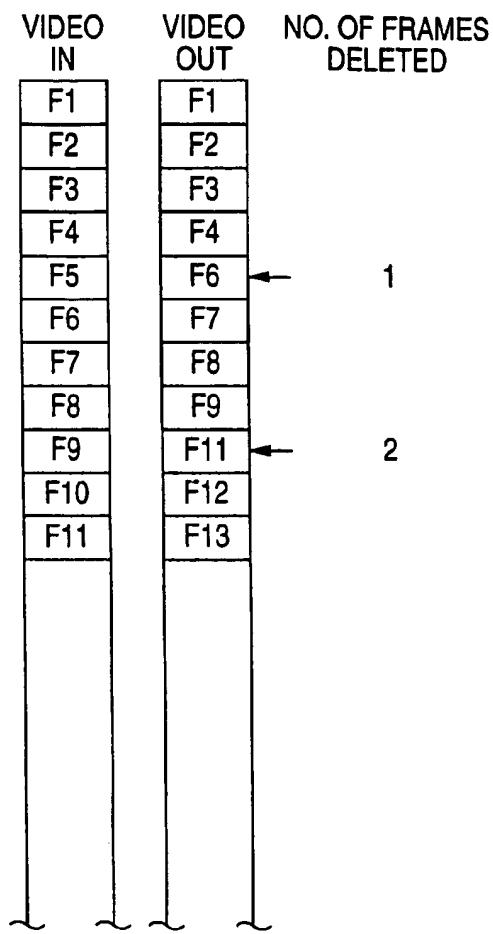


FIG. 2

FIG. 3

**VIDEO/AUDIO PROCESSING SYSTEM
PROVIDING REAL TIME PROGRAM
DURATION ALTERATION**

This is a divisional of application Ser. No. 09/426,844, filed Oct. 26, 1999 which is a divisional of application Ser. No. 08/552,357, filed Nov. 2, 1995 now U.S. Pat. No. 5,995,153.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to video signal processing methods and systems. More particularly, this invention relates to methods and systems for altering the content of video program material to expand or contract the total length of an entire program or program segment.

Video signal processing systems and methods are known for editing the content of an entire program or program segment in order to expand or contract the total program run time to match a desired run length or time segment. Frequently, a program or commercial which is scheduled for a predetermined broadcast time slot has a total running time which does not match exactly the time slot. In such cases, it is necessary to edit the program in order to fill the time slot exactly. In known systems, the program material must first be recorded on some suitable recording medium, such as magnetic tape, after which portions of the video program are deleted or repeated in order to contract or expand the running time to match the time slot. Such systems suffer from the disadvantage that the program to be edited cannot be simultaneously broadcast, but must be time delayed by the recording process. In addition, this technique is incompatible with live events, such as soccer matches, football games and the like, which must be broadcast and viewed substantially simultaneously. Efforts to date to provide real time video time editing to contract or expand the program length to match a desired run length have not met with success to date.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The invention comprises a method and system for providing real time video program expansion or contraction which is relatively inexpensive to implement, easy to operate, and effective matching program run time with a predetermined run length. In addition, the invention is effective in creating surplus broadcast from any program in order to provide additional broadcast time for other information, such as commercial spots, public service announcements, and the like.

From a processing standpoint, the invention comprises a method of adjusting the total time length of a program having a fixed time duration by deleting or repeating individual frames or fields of video and audio segments on-the-fly, either on a fixed periodic basis, an automatic basis or manually using an operator controlled deletion or insertion circuit. The audio segments may or may not correspond to the frames or fields, but need only match the total time value of the deleted or repeated video frames or fields.

To contract a given program in the manual mode of operation, the operator monitors the video program material and deletes one frame or field at a time. A counter accumulates the time value of the sum of deleted frames or fields and displays this total to the operator. Once the desired amount of additional broadcast time has been accumulated, the original program material is permitted to be passed through unmodified. To expand a given program in the manual mode, the operator monitors the video program material and

repeats one frame or field at a time, and the time accumulation counter keeps track of the total amount of time value of the repeated frames or fields and displays this information to the operator. Once the correct amount of time has been added to the original program material, the original program material is permitted to pass through unmodified. During the video deletion or repetition, corresponding segments of audio are deleted or repeated.

In the periodic mode of operation, the operator enters the total amount of time to be deleted or added to the original program material length, and frames or fields and corresponding audio segments are deleted or added automatically in a periodic manner, e.g. one frame every five frames, one field every five fields, etc. The time counter accumulates the running total of deleted or added time, and terminates the deletion or insertion process when the running total equals the preselected amount.

In the automatic mode of operation, the operator adds the total amount of time to be deleted or added to the original program material length, and frames or fields and audio segments are deleted or added automatically, with the choice of particular frames/fields and audio segments being determined by video motion detectors and audio pitch and level detectors, so that optimal deletion or insertion is effected.

In both the periodic and automatic modes of operation, an optional pause function protects any specially selected sensitive programming material from being affected by the time change processing. The pause function itself may be manually controlled by an operator, or automatically performed by detecting special marker information inserted in predetermined frames/fields, or in reserved portions of same (i.e. during vertical blanking).

The invention enables on-the-fly adjustment of the running time of program material without affecting the actual broadcast of the program material. In addition, for programs of indeterminate length, the invention enables a fixed amount of time to be added or deleted over a preselected time period. For example, the invention can be used to gain a preselected fixed amount of time—e.g. ten minutes over a one hour broadcast time period—using either the manual or periodic modes of operation. Most importantly, the time deletion or insertion does not visibly affect the program content as experienced by the viewer, so that the program material can be enjoyed to the same extent as the original program material.

For a fuller understanding of the nature and advantages of the invention reference should be made to the ensuing detailed description of the invention, taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a video and audio processing system incorporating the invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating the frame deletion process; and

FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram illustrating the frame insertion process.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Turning now to the drawings, FIG. 1 is a block diagram of a video and audio processing system incorporating the invention. As seen in this figure, the video and audio portions of standard program signals (e.g. NTSC, PAL, SECAM or the like) are initially separated into the indi-

vidual video and audio components using conventional circuitry (not shown). The video portion is applied to the input of a first signal processor unit 12 incorporating an analog to digital converter 14, a digital video memory 15, and a digital to analog converter 16. The video is first converted from analog to digital form in analog to digital converter 14 and stored in digital video memory 15. Digital video output from digital video memory 15 is converted back to analog form in digital to analog converter 16 and supplied to a first output terminal 17 as time changed video.

Similarly, the audio portion of the programming material is supplied to an audio signal processing unit generally designated with reference numeral 22 and including an analog to digital converter 24, a digital audio memory 25, and a digital to analog converter 26. The audio portion of the programming material is thus converted from analog to digital form in analog to digital converter 24, stored in digital form in digital audio memory 25, and converted from digital to analog form in digital to analog converter 26. The analog output from digital to analog converter 26 is supplied to a second output terminal 27 as time charged audio. Analog to digital converters 14, 24 and digital to analog converter 16, 26 are conventional units having an appropriate bit size (e.g. 8 bits per sample) and a clocking speed compatible with the frequency content of their respective input signals. For example, the clock rate for analog to digital converter 14 used in the preferred embodiment is 13.5 MHz, although other clock frequencies may be employed so long as they comply with the known requirements of sampling theory. The bit size used in the preferred embodiment for analog to digital converter 24 is 16 bits per sample, and the clock rate employed is 48 KHz. Similar considerations apply to digital to analog converters 16 and 26.

Digital video memory 15 is a conventional digital storage unit having a capacity at least equal to the maximum accumulation time expected to be afforded by the system. For example, for a system designed to accumulate 30 seconds worth of frame time over a one-hour total interval, digital video memory 15 would have a capacity to store at least 900 frames of NTSC video. Similar considerations apply to digital audio memory 25: however, the total storage capacity of digital audio memory 25 may be substantially less than that of digital memory 15 due to the lower frequencies at which audio is conveyed. In the preferred embodiment, digital audio memory 25 has a storage capacity of 30 seconds (i.e., the same time storage capacity of digital video memory 15).

Video processing unit 15 incorporates circuitry termed a Δ segment circuit 18 which may be manually overridden by a manual video control 19. The purpose of the Δ segment circuitry 18 is to either delete or insert frames of video from the sequence of frames stored in digital video memory 15 on a programmed basis. Frame deletion is done by simply skipping over a frame in the normal sequence of frames and is described below with reference to FIG. 2. Frame insertion is accomplished by simply repeating a given frame in the frame sequence and is described below with reference to FIG. 3. In the periodic mode of operation, the frame deletion or insertion rate is set by the manual control 19, which the operator uses to dial in the total number of frames or amount of time to be deleted or added to the original program content during the initial stage of the signal processing. Thus, for example, if the operator wishes to delete ten seconds of time over a one-hour period, that number is entered by means of manual control 19 into the Δ segment circuit 18, and the circuitry periodically deletes every 10th frame until a total of 10 seconds worth of frame time has been deleted or saved.

During the periodic frame deletion or insertion processing, a ΔV circuit 20 keeps track of the total time value of the deleted or inserted frames. ΔV circuit 20 essentially comprises a counter which receives frame deletion or insertion signals from the segment circuit 18 and either increments or decrements in response to each deleted or inserted frame.

Audio processing circuit 22 is provided with similar Δ segment circuitry 28 and Δ audio circuitry 30 for the similar purpose of deleting or adding audio segments and keeping track of the total time value of the segments deleted or inserted. Δ segment circuit 28 is controlled by manual control unit 19 in tandem with Δ segment circuit 18. However, the actual audio portions which are deleted or repeated need not correspond exactly to the same frames which are deleted or repeated by video processing unit 12: in fact, the audio portions which are deleted or inserted may be segments of audio signals from different frames. It is sufficient that any time delay between the video and the audio signal portions subjected to the time variation processing and presented to output terminals 17, 27 not exceed ± 3 video frames, with a maximum difference of ± 1 frame being preferred. By observing these constraints, no lip sync error is introduced to the original programming material in an observable fashion.

As indicated by the legends GL and External Sync Gen, the video processing unit 12 may be coupled to and driven by an external sync generator, such as a studio sync generator, so that the video processing can be done in synchronous fashion with other video broadcasting or reproduction equipment.

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating the frame deletion process in either the periodic or manual mode. As schematically represented in this figure, the leftmost column represents the sequence of video frames incoming on input terminal 10 into the video processing unit 12. The middle column labeled video out represents the sequence of outgoing frames after processing is done. The rightmost column indicates the total number of frames deleted. The process begins by specifying with manual control unit 19 the number of frames to be deleted or the time value of these frames to the Δ segment unit 18. Thereafter, the first four frames (F1-F4) are simply passed through the processing unit 12 essentially unaffected. Frame 5 (F5), however, is deleted and replaced with frame 6 (F6), and frames 7-9 (F7-F9) are output in sequence after frame 6. Similarly, frame 10 (F10) is deleted, and frame 11 (F11) is output after frame 9 (F9). After five frame times, one frame is deleted; after ten frame times, two frames are deleted, etc. up until the desired total number of frames n (or the time corresponding thereto). Thereafter, the frames are simply passed through the digital video memory 15 essentially unaffected (since the total desired amount of time has already been accumulated).

During the frame deletion process, corresponding segments of audio are similarly deleted. However, the audio segments need not correspond exactly to the frames deleted. Stated differently, portions of audio from one frame may be deleted along with portions of audio from a preceding or succeeding frame; or all of the audio of a given frame may be deleted, as desired. The manner in which the audio segments are actually chosen for deletion will depend upon the frequency characteristics of the audio encountered, and are chosen in order to minimize the introduction of any audible noise signals into the final output signals.

FIG. 3 is a schematic diagram illustrating the frame insertion process in order to expand the total run time of the

program material. This process is essentially the reverse of the frame deletion process and proceeds by specifying the total number of frames or the time equivalent to be inserted into the length of the program material using manual control unit 19, followed by processing of the successive frames of video (and corresponding audio) to repeat every *i*th frame until the total number of frames (i.e., the desired time) have been accumulated.

Appendix A to this application contains a discussion of the time equations which apply to proper operation of the invention.

As noted above, Δ segment circuits 18, 28 can be manually overridden by manual control unit 19 to provide operator controlled frame insertion or frame deletion. In the preferred embodiment, manual control unit 19 includes a rotatable knob with a detent feel. Rotation of the knob in the clockwise direction provides one inserted frame per detent; while rotation of the knob in the counter-clockwise direction results in one frame deletion. Not illustrated in the figure is a display unit, which may be any one of a number of conventional display devices (e.g. an LCD display) which indicates the total number of frames or total time value selected by the manual control unit 19 and, if desired, the running total of ΔV and ΔA .

Returning to FIG. 1, a third mode of operation—termed auto mode—is also provided according to the invention. In this mode of operation, the total number of frames or total amount of time to be deleted or inserted is again specified by manual control unit 19; however, the actual choice of which particular frames are to be deleted or inserted and which particular audio segments are to be deleted or inserted, is automatically controlled by a pair of detector circuits. Control of the video frame deletion/insertion is done by a motion detect circuit 40 which incorporates any one of a number of known algorithms for determining the amount of motion change between adjacent frames, and permits deletion/insertion of a given frame whenever the change in motion between the frames does not exceed a selected threshold value. Such circuits are well known and have been used in video compression and coding systems. However, motion detect circuit 40 is constrained to either delete or insert a specified total number of frames over a fixed period of time in accordance with the parameters specified by manual control unit 19. Consequently, motion detect circuit 40 is provided with the accumulated total count from circuit 20, and an internal timing unit (not illustrated) in order to measure the progress of the frame deletion or insertion processing. If the total number of deleted or accumulated frames runs behind the elapsed real time (due to program content with relatively large amounts of motion over a large sequence of frames), the motion detect threshold is automatically raised by motion detect circuit 40 in order to permit a relatively larger number of frames to be deleted or inserted so that the system will succeed in deleting or inserting the desired amount of time over the prescribed total program real time period.

Similarly, a pitch and level detect circuit 50 selects which audio portions contain the most effective frequencies and amplitudes capable of being deleted with minimal impairment to the audio (e.g. by not introducing "pops" or "clicks" into the audio). Pitch and level detect circuit 50 is similarly supplied with the running total from the ΔA circuit 30, and is provided with a threshold adjusting circuit to enable the threshold to be raised if the audio deletion processing is running behind the total elapsed time of the real time program.

The sensitivity threshold of circuits 40 and 50 may also be functionally coupled to the amount of time change desired,

as suggested by the diagonal arrows overlying elements 12, 22, 40 and 50. Thus, for a maximum amount of time change, the sensitivity thresholds are raised, while for a minimum amount of time change, the sensitivity thresholds are lowered.

Both motion detect circuit 40 and pitch and level detect circuit 50 are provided with control output lines 42, 52 which are used to control the Δ segment circuits 18, 28 on an on-the-fly basis. Thus, for example, motion detect circuit 40 may determine that three successive frames are to be deleted from the frame sequence: in such a case, a control signal is issued on control line 42 to the Δ segment circuit 18 to delete the three identified successive frames. Similarly, pitch and level detect circuit 50 will determine those audio segments which are to be deleted from frame portions, and issues control signals on control line 52 to the Δ segment circuit 28.

In order to ensure that the total time delay between the time changed output video on terminal 17 and the time changed output audio on terminal 27 does not exceed the preselected maximum frame difference (i.e., ± 1 frame time in the preferred embodiment), the accumulated video time and accumulated audio time are coupled from the ΔV circuit 20 and ΔA circuit 30, respectively, via motion detect circuit 40 and pitch and level detect circuit 50 to an A/V phase difference comparator 60. In the event that the video portions and the audio portions on the output terminals 17, 27 are close to the maximum separation difference, the comparator 60 issues control signals on control lines 61, 62 to the motion detect circuit 40 and pitch and level detect circuit 50. These control signals are then used by circuits 40, 50 to select video frames and audio segments for deletion or insertion which steer the A/V difference in the proper direction.

Some program materials may include segments which should not be subject to frame deletion or insertion due to the nature of the subject matter. For example, some commercial providers may require that the commercial programming information not be altered in any way. In such cases, it is useful to provide a pause function which terminates frame deletion and frame insertion until the sensitive programming material has been passed through the signal processing units 12, 22. This function is provided by disabling operation of the Δ segment circuits 18, 28, as well as operation of the manual control 19. The pause function may be implemented in the form of a manually operable switch—e.g. a push button switch—and an indicator specifying the state of the pause function circuit; or may be automatically implemented using appropriate circuitry for detecting predetermined codes or other markers in predetermined portions of the video frames. For example, a special character may be inserted in the vertical blanking interval specifying the first frame in a sequence of frames for which the pause function is required; and an end of sequence special character may be inserted in the last frame. Such a character may be conveniently inserted during non-viewable portions of a frame, such as in the vertical blanking interval. Other specific implementations of the pause function will occur to those skilled in the art.

As will now be apparent, the invention is capable of increasing and decreasing passages of time in programming material by significant amounts, without impairing the subjective quality of the programming materials as viewed. For example, for NTSC video, by deleting one out of every twelve frames, a total of five minutes per hour can be accumulated or "saved" for other purposes. Similarly, by adding an additional frame every six frames in NTSC video

ten minutes per hour can be added to the total running time of programming material. In addition, it should be noted that the removal of audit segments at different points in time from the video frames optimizes the quality of the final video/audio output from the system, since it enables separate alteration of the video and audio portions based on the information content and using techniques which are optimal to video signals and audio signals separately. This ensures that the quality of the finally produced programming material is nearly as high as the original material.

While the above provides a full and complete description of the preferred embodiments of the invention, various modifications, alternate constructions and equivalents may be employed, as desired. For example, while the invention has been described with reference to deletion and insertion of frames of video, these principles apply to deletion and insertion of individual fields of information. Therefore, the above description and illustrations should not be construed as limiting the scope of the invention, which is defined by the appended claims.

APPENDIX A

For this machine the following time equations must hold true:

$$\Delta T_V = \sum_a^n \Delta t_V$$

and

$$T_A = \sum_a^n \Delta t_A$$

Where:

ΔT_V =Total accumulated Video delay (+/-) time

ΔT_A =Total accumulated Audio delay (+/-) time

Δt_V =Time duration of each Video packet (usually one frame)

Δt_A =Time duration of each Audio packet (about 5 mil. sec. for this example)

n=Number of Video packets needed to achieve total time change desired

a=ratio between the time duration of the video and audio packets.

For the machine to work:

$$\Delta T_V = \Delta T_A$$

or

$$\Delta T_A = \Delta T_V \pm \Delta t_V$$

These statements must hold to accomplish the desired time change (+/-) while maintaining lip-sync. Equation 1) holds for exact lip-sync while Equation 2) holds for minimum picture and sound anomalies.

"Time Machine" run modes:

Manual—where a knob can be turned clock wise or counter clock wise to increase or decrease time in frame increments.

Auto—where a preset amount of time change (+/-) will automatically accrue where the audio and video can be locked together ($\Delta T_V = \Delta T_A$) or run independently ($\Delta T_A = \Delta T_V \pm \Delta t_V$)

"Time Machine" features:

Time change accrual can be stopped and restarted to coincide with such sacred timed segments as commercials.

Motion, pitch and level change sensitivity can be adjusted to speed up or slow down the rate of time change accrual.

Maximum number of packet changes per second can be set to minimize excessive changes in time in the Auto mode.

What is claimed is:

- 5 1. An apparatus for altering the total running time of an original program signal in real time to generate a time-altered program signal, the original program signal including an original video program signal that includes a plurality of video signal elements in sequence, each video signal element having a predefined length of video time associated therewith, the original program signal also including an original audio program signal, the original audio program signal including a plurality of audio signal segments in sequence, each audio signal segment having the predefined length of audio time associated therewith, each video signal element having one or more corresponding audio signal segments associated therewith, the apparatus comprising:
- (a) a video analog-to-digital converter (ADC) that receives the original video program signal and converts each video signal element of the original video program signal to corresponding digital video data;
- (b) a video data processor that compares digital video data received from the video ADC and corresponding to adjacent video signal elements in said sequence of video signal elements, determines an amount of motion difference between said adjacent video signal elements, and deletes digital video data corresponding to a video signal element if the motion difference between said adjacent video signal elements is less than or equal to a predefined motion difference threshold value to provide a time-shortened sequence of digital video data;
- (c) a digital video memory buffer that stores digital video data received by the digital video memory buffer from the video data processor;
- (d) an audio analog-to-digital converter (ADC) that receives the original audio program signal and converts each audio signal segment of the original audio program signal to corresponding digital audio data;
- (e) an audio data processor that compares digital audio data received from the audio ADC and corresponding to adjacent audio signal segments in said sequence of audio signal segments, determines an amount of audio signal difference between said adjacent audio signal segments, and, for each video signal element deleted from the original video program signal, deletes digital audio data corresponding to one or more audio signal segments, such that the amount of deleted audio time substantially corresponds to the predefined length of time associated with the deleted video signal element, based upon the amount of audio signal difference between adjacent audio signal segments to provide a time-shortened sequence of digital audio data;
- (f) a digital audio memory buffer that stores digital audio data received by the digital audio memory buffer from the audio data processor;
- (g) a video digital-to-analog converter (DAC) that converts a sequence of digital video data output by the digital video memory buffer to a corresponding time-shortened analog video program signal;
- (h) an audio digital-to-analog converter (DAC) that converts a sequence of digital audio data output by the digital audio memory buffer to a corresponding time-shortened analog audio program signal;
- (i) circuitry that provides the time-shortened analog video program signal and the time-shortened analog audio program signal as a time-shortened broadcast program signal; and

(j) a threshold adjustment element for raising the motion difference threshold value on-the-fly such that, if the total number of deleted video signal elements runs behind a programmed elapsed time, whereby the motion difference threshold value is automatically 5 raised to permit a larger number of video signal elements to be deleted.

2. An apparatus that automatically alters the total running time of an original program signal in real time to generate a time-shortened program signal, the original program signal 10 including an original video program signal that includes a plurality of video frame signals in sequence, each video frame signal having a predefined frame time associated therewith, the original program signal also including an original audio program signal, the original audio program 15 signal including a plurality of audio signal segments, each audio signal segment having the predefined audio segment time associated therewith, each video frame signal having one or more corresponding audio signal segments associated therewith, the apparatus comprising:

(a) a video analog-to-digital converter (ADC) that receives the original video program signal and converts each video frame signal element of the original video program signal to corresponding digital video data;

(b) a video data processor that compares digital video data received from the video ADC and corresponding to adjacent video frame signal in said sequence of video frame signals, determines an amount of motion difference between said adjacent video frame signals, and automatically deletes digital video data corresponding to a video frame signal if the motion difference between said adjacent video frame signals is less than or equal to a predefined motion difference threshold value to provide a time-shortened sequence of digital video data;

(c) a digital video memory buffer that stores digital video data received by the digital video memory buffer from the video data processor;

(d) an audio analog-to-digital converter (ADC) that receives the original audio program signal and converts each audio signal segment of the original audio program signal to corresponding digital audio data;

(e) an audio data processor that compares digital audio data received from the audio ADC and corresponding

to adjacent audio signal segments in said sequence of audio signal segments, determines an amount of audio signal difference between said adjacent audio signal segments, and, for each video frame signal deleted from the original video program signal, automatically deletes digital audio data corresponding to one or more audio signal segments, such that the amount of deleted audio time substantially corresponds to the predefined length of time associated with the deleted video frame signal, based upon the amount of audio signal difference between adjacent audio signal segments, to provide a time-shortened sequence of digital audio data;

(f) a digital audio memory buffer that stores digital audio data received by the digital audio memory buffer from the audio data processor;

(g) a video digital-to-analog converter (DAC) that converts a sequence of digital video data output by the digital video memory buffer to a corresponding time-shortened analog video program signal;

(h) an audio digital-to-analog converter (DAC) that converts a sequence of digital audio data output by the digital audio memory buffer to a corresponding time-shortened analog audio program signal; and

(i) circuitry that provides the time-shortened analog video program signal and the time-shortened analog audio program signal as a time-shortened broadcast program signal.

3. An apparatus as in claim 2, and further comprising a broadcast system that broadcasts the time-shortened broadcast program signal substantially simultaneously with generation of the time-shortened broadcast program signal.

4. An apparatus as in claim 2, and further comprising means for combining an additional program signal with the time-shortened broadcast program signal to generate a new program signal.

5. An apparatus as in claim 4, and wherein the additional program signal comprises a signal corresponding to advertising information.

6. An apparatus as in claim 2, and further comprising a counter that counts total cumulative time deleted from the original video program signal.

* * * * *

UNITED STATES PATENT AND TRADEMARK OFFICE
CERTIFICATE OF CORRECTION

PATENT NO. : 6,424,677 B1
DATED : July 23, 2002
INVENTOR(S) : Moeller et al.

Page 1 of 1

It is certified that error appears in the above-identified patent and that said Letters Patent is hereby corrected as shown below:

Title page.

Item [73], please change Assignee's name from "Price Image" to -- "Prime Image" --

Signed and Sealed this

Twenty-sixth Day of November, 2002

Attest:

Attesting Officer

JAMES E. ROGAN
Director of the United States Patent and Trademark Office





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US005706290A

United States Patent [19]

Shaw et al.

[11] Patent Number: 5,706,290

[45] Date of Patent: Jan. 6, 1998

[54] **METHOD AND APPARATUS INCLUDING SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE FOR MULTIMEDIA COMMUNICATION**[76] Inventors: **Venson Shaw, 11 Yellow Brook Rd., Marlboro, N.J. 07746; Steven M. Shaw, 111 Reidy Ave., Leonia, N.J. 07605**

[21] Appl. No. 516,603

[22] Filed: Aug. 18, 1995

Related U.S. Application Data

[63] Continuation of Ser. No. 356,486, Dec. 15, 1994, abandoned.

[51] Int. Cl. 6 G06T 1/00

[52] U.S. Cl. 370/465; 395/806; 348/390; 348/586; 358/426; 382/232; 364/514 A

[58] Field of Search 370/465-468, 370/230-231; 395/612, 114, 888, 327-328, 806-807, 200.01-200.21, 800, 501, 502, 507, 516, 285; 348/384-459, 586, 589; 358/426-433; 382/166, 232-253, 305; 375/240-241; 364/514 A, 514 R

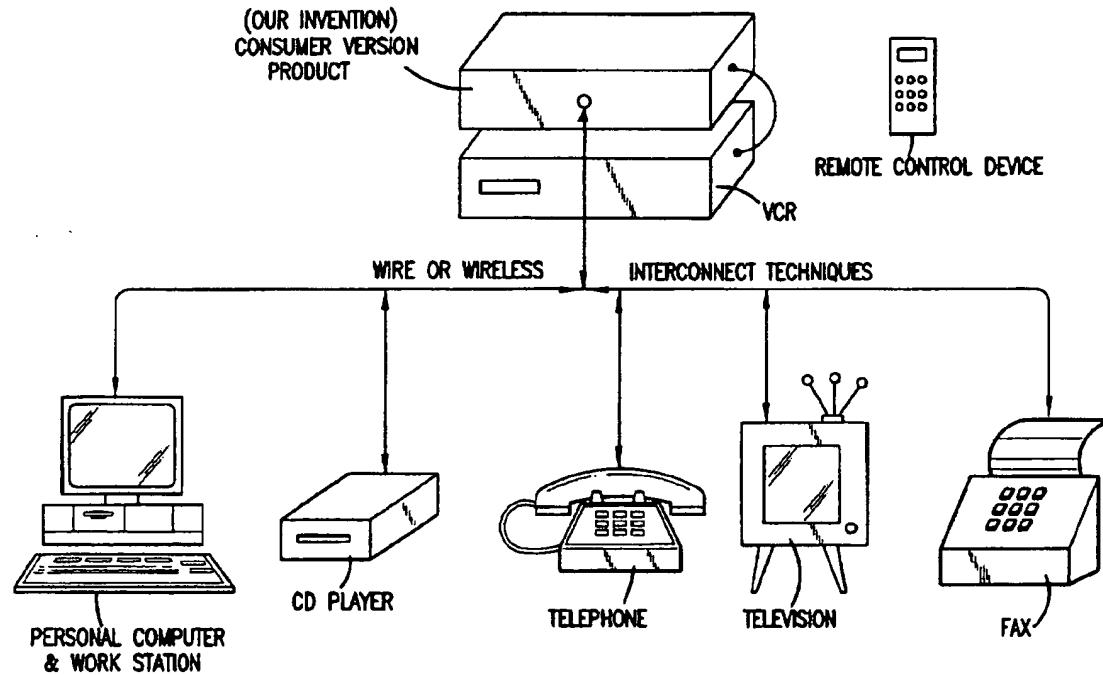
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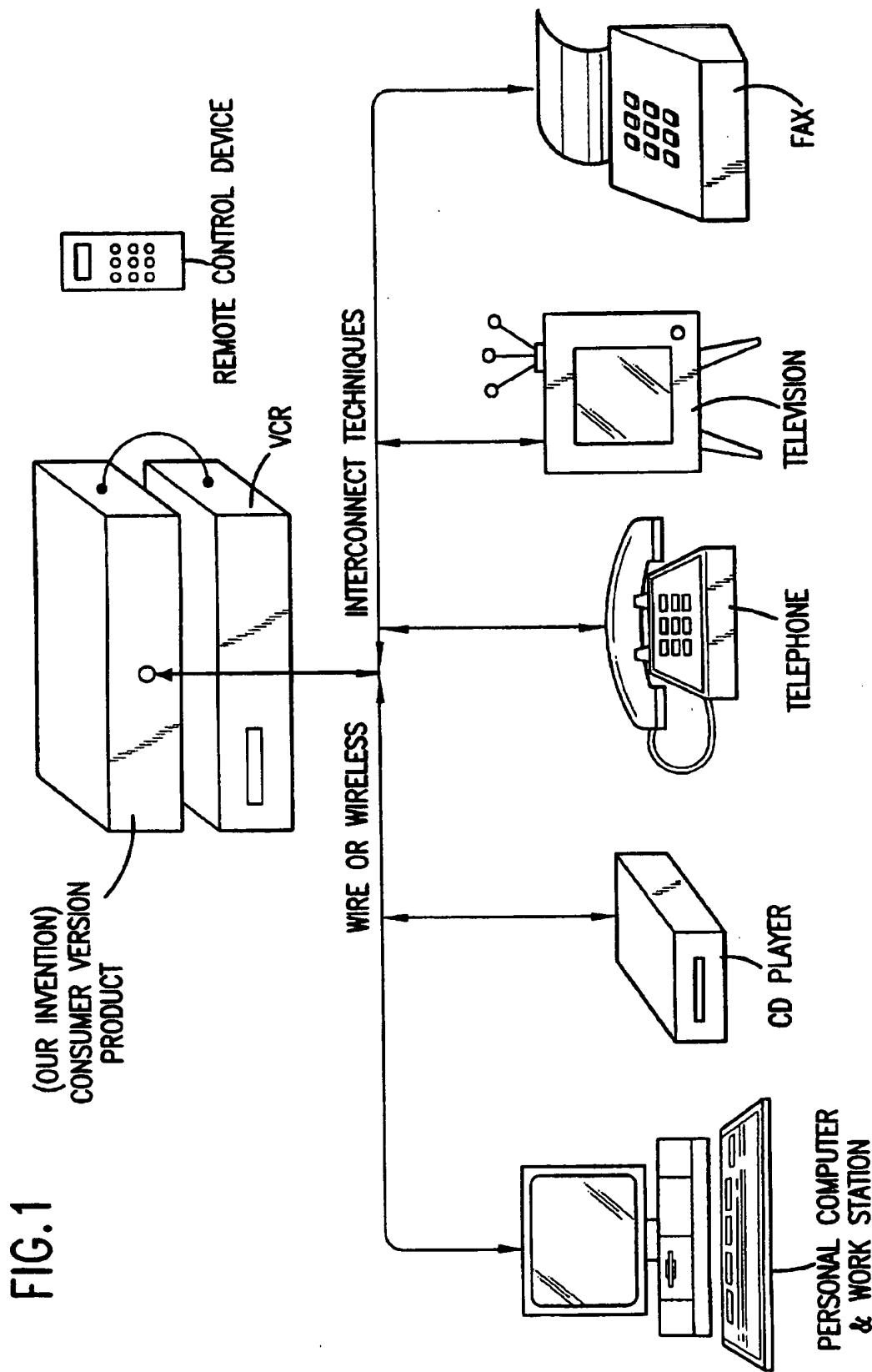
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*Primary Examiner—Joseph H. Feild**Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Clifford G. Frayne*[57] **ABSTRACT**

A controller apparatus and method for executing a plurality of control functions for communication of multimedia articles including voice, audio, text, still image, motion video and animated graphics which incorporates a frame memory system which is compatible with multiple standard or customized coding algorithmic signals such as H.261, MPEG, JPEG, EDTV or HDTV or in multiple incompatible video coding equipment employing different video coding algorithms can now freely communicate with each other, the controller apparatus further including a band width management function for automatically scaling the multimedia article signal to conform to available band width.

30 Claims, 26 Drawing Sheets





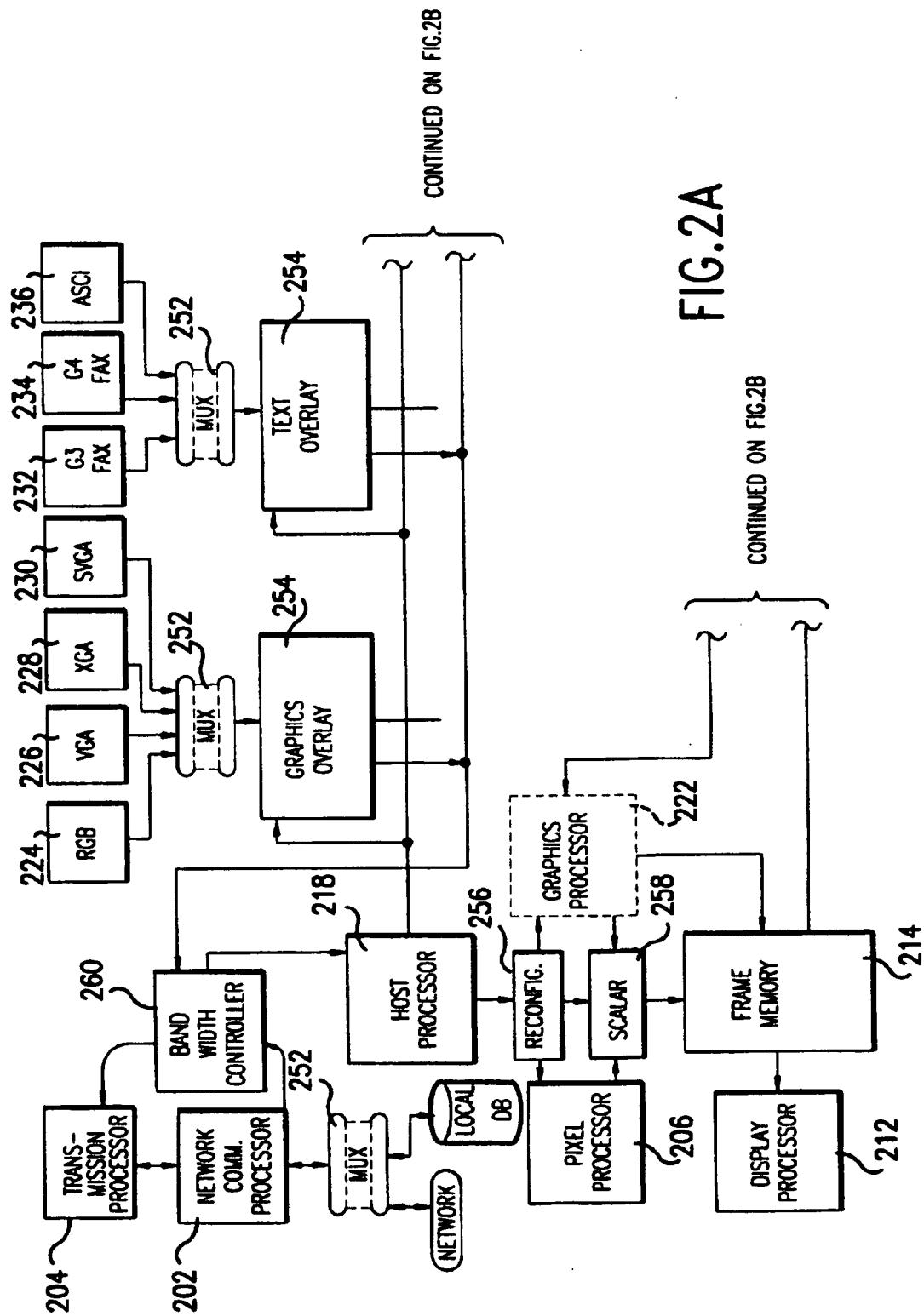
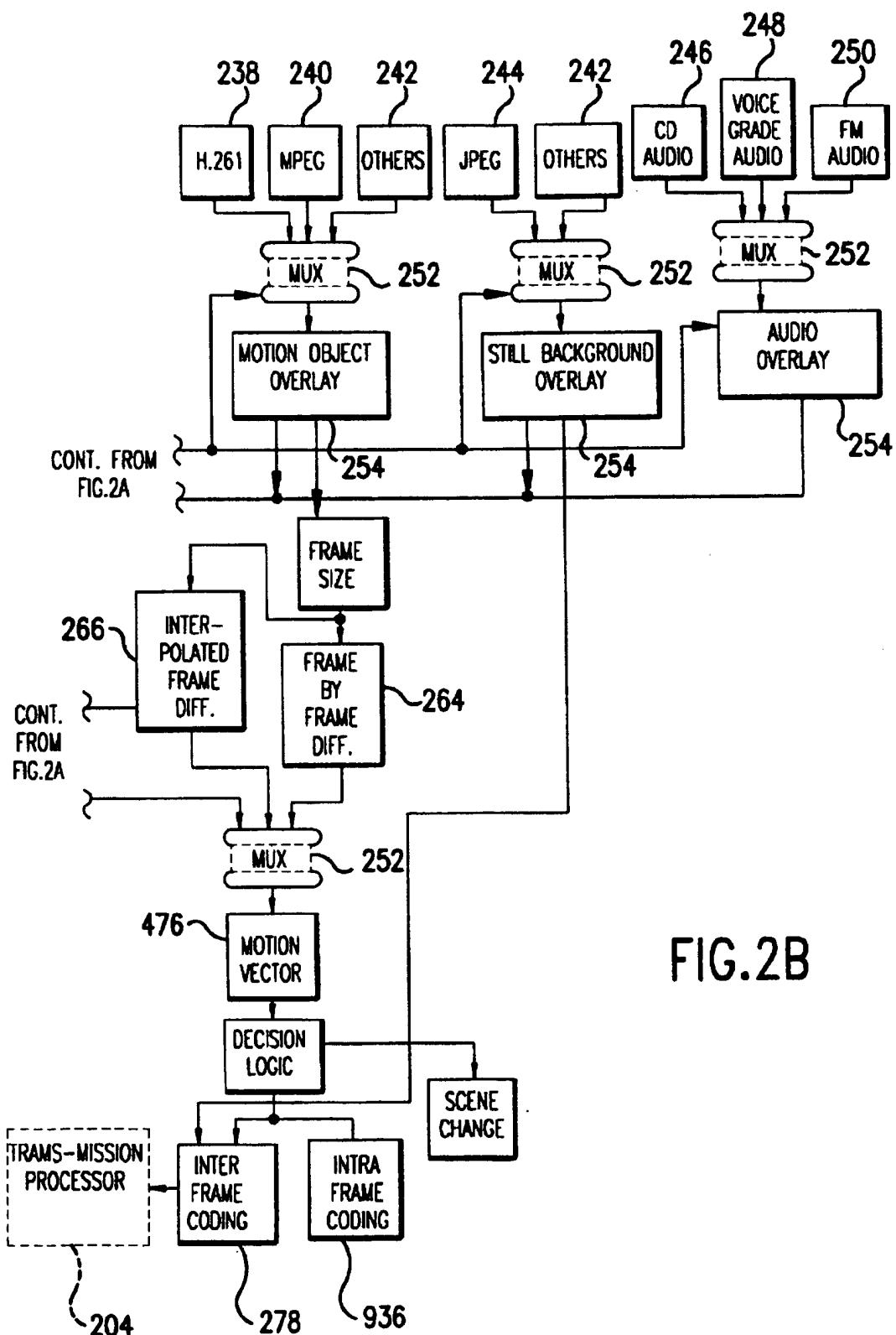


FIG.2A

CONTINUED ON FIG.2B



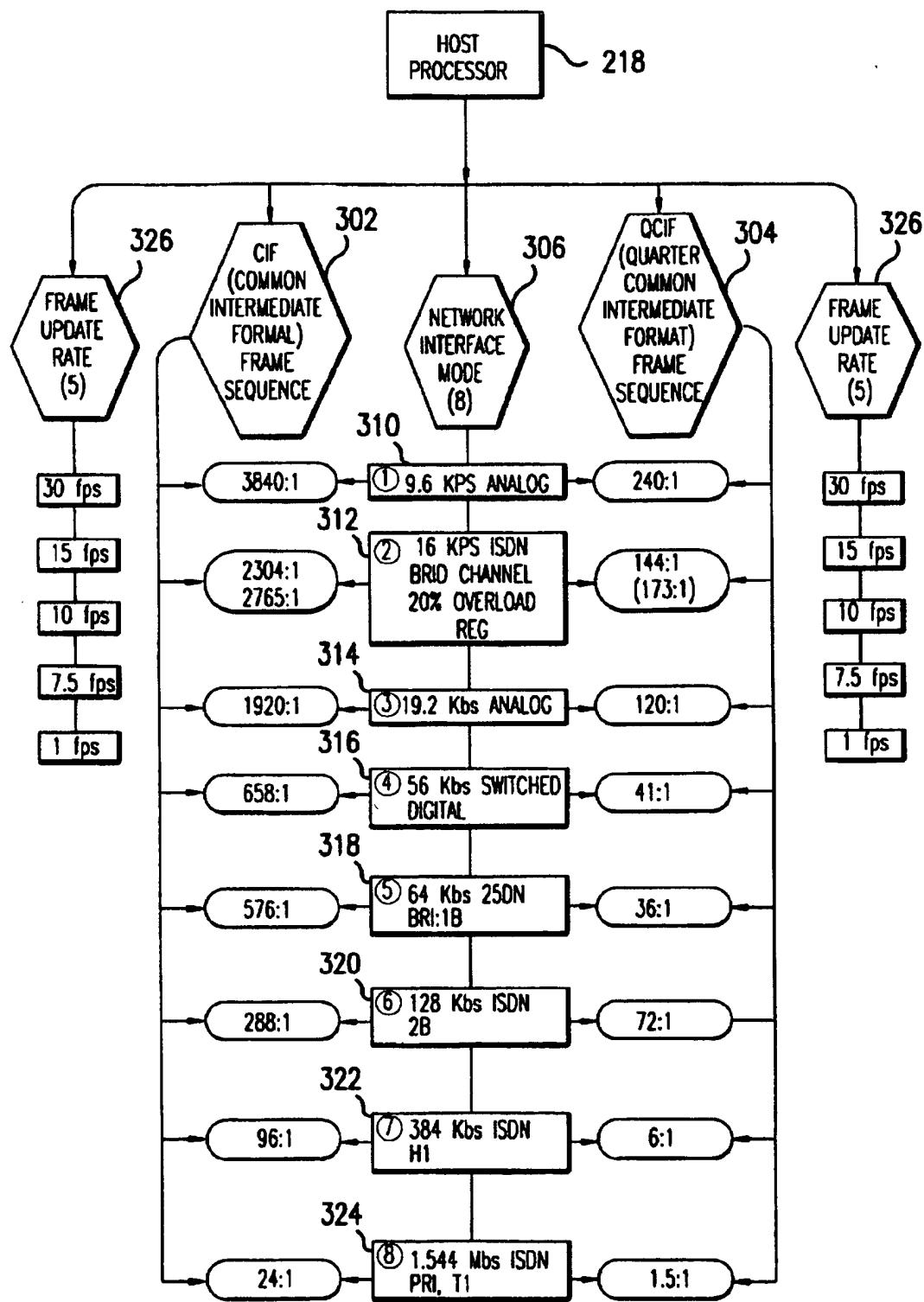


FIG.3

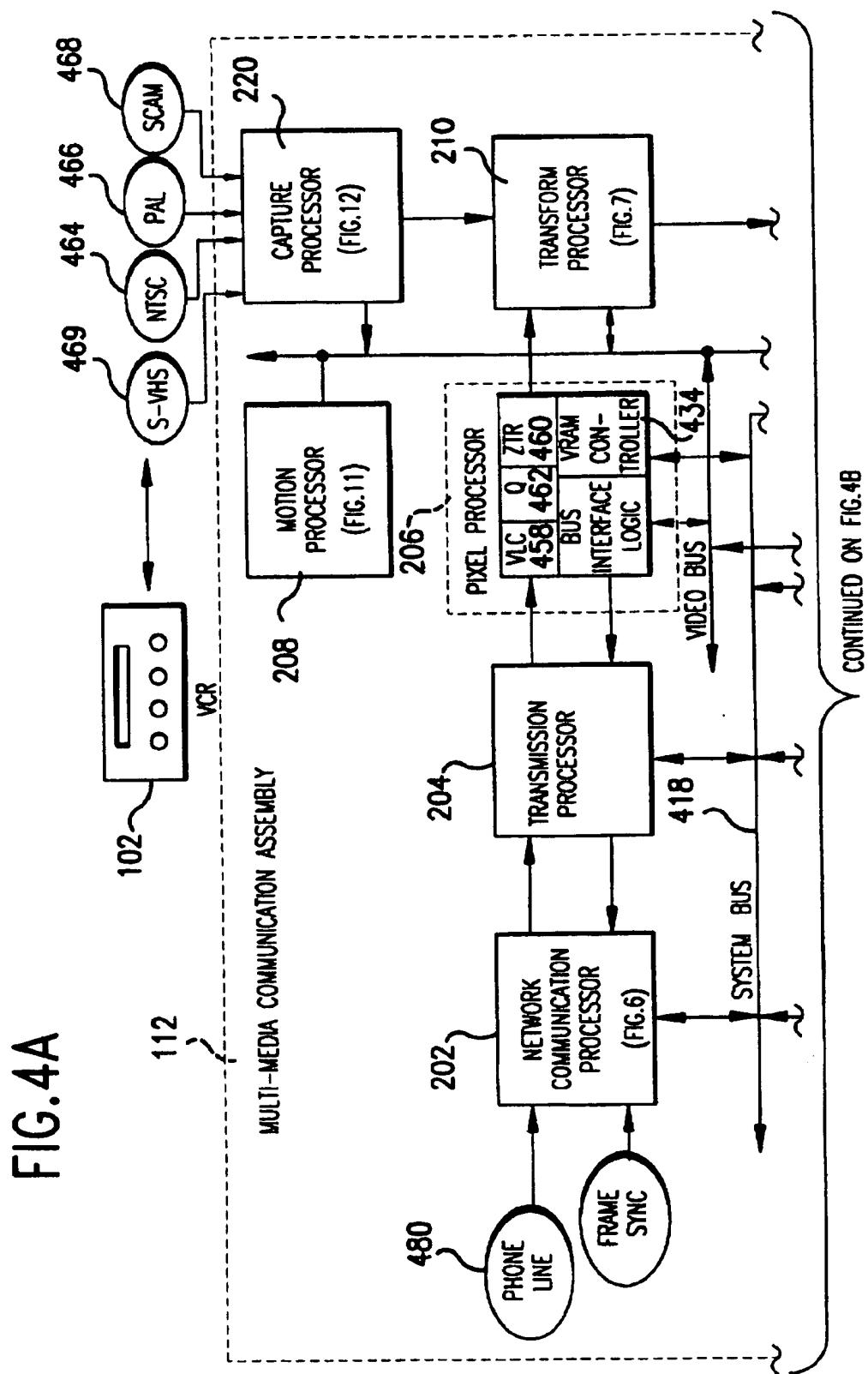
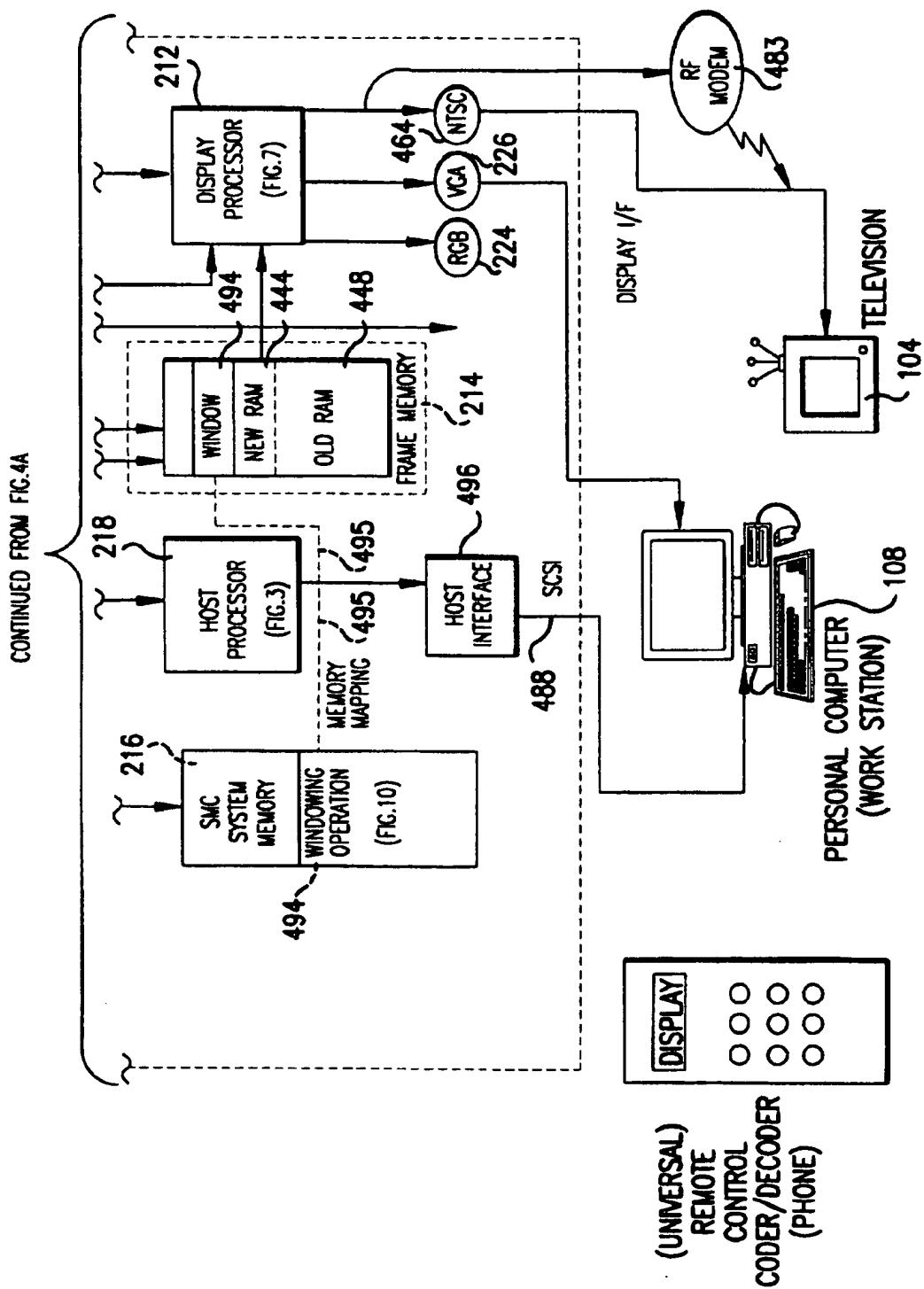


FIG. 4B



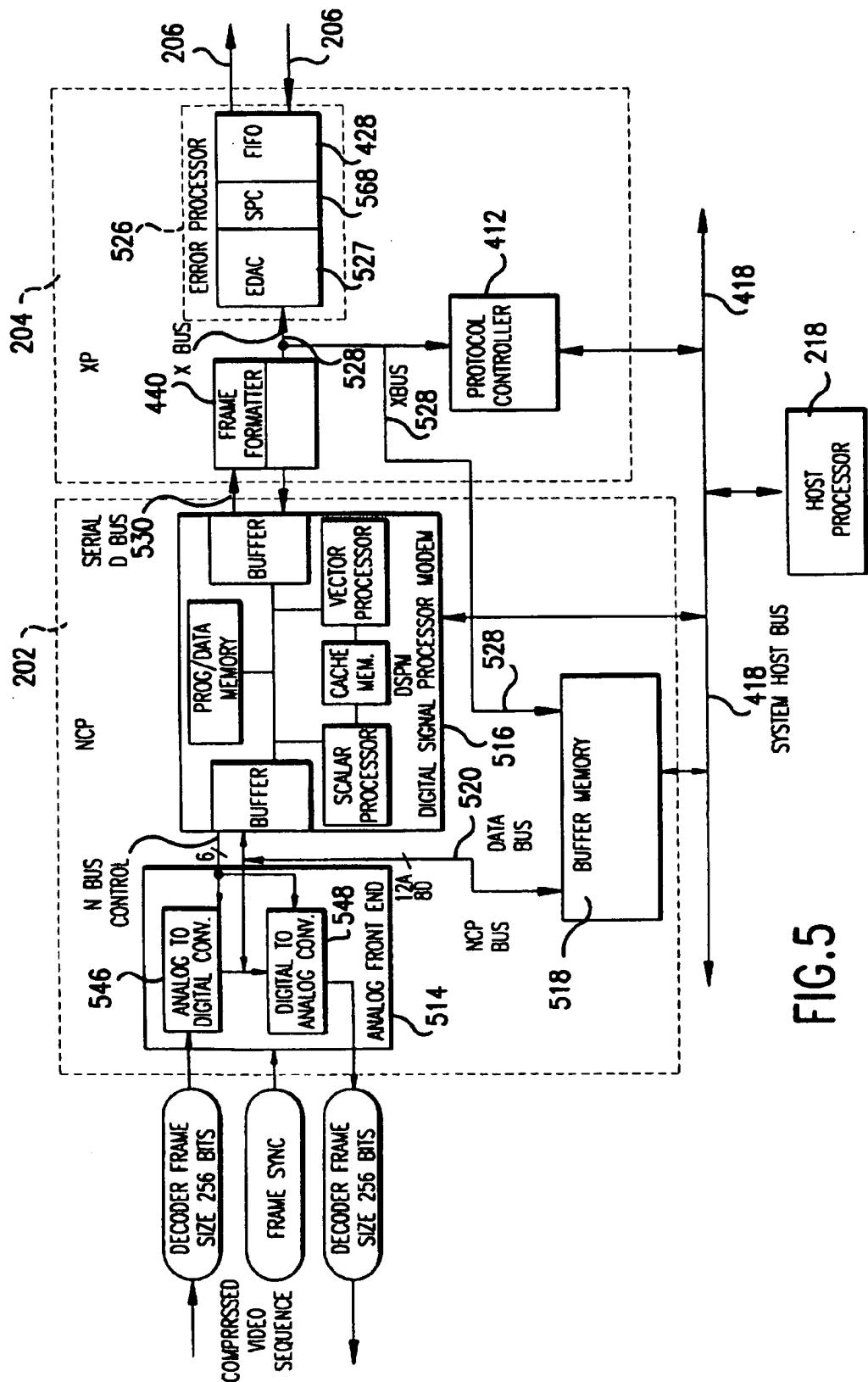


FIG. 5

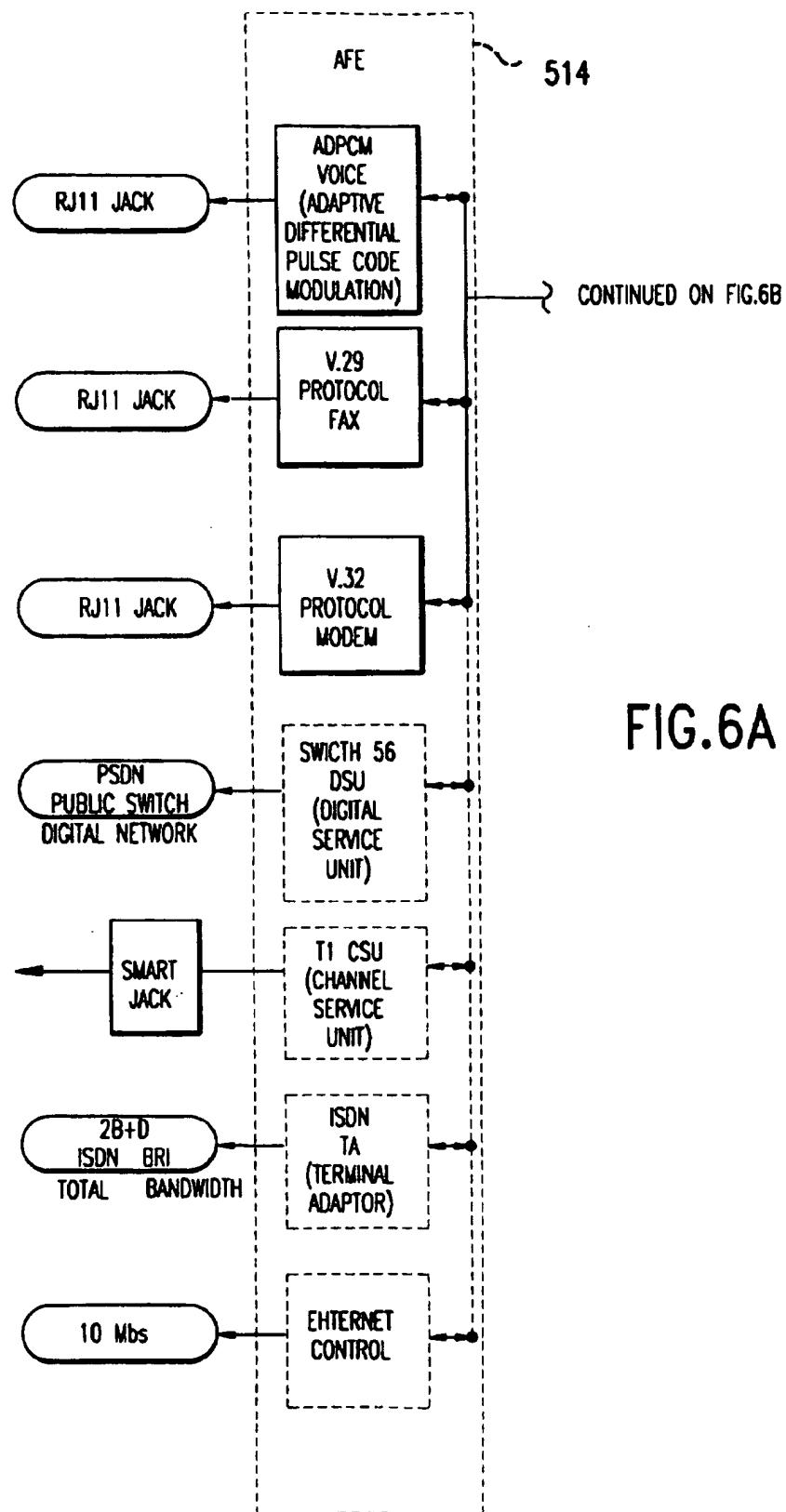
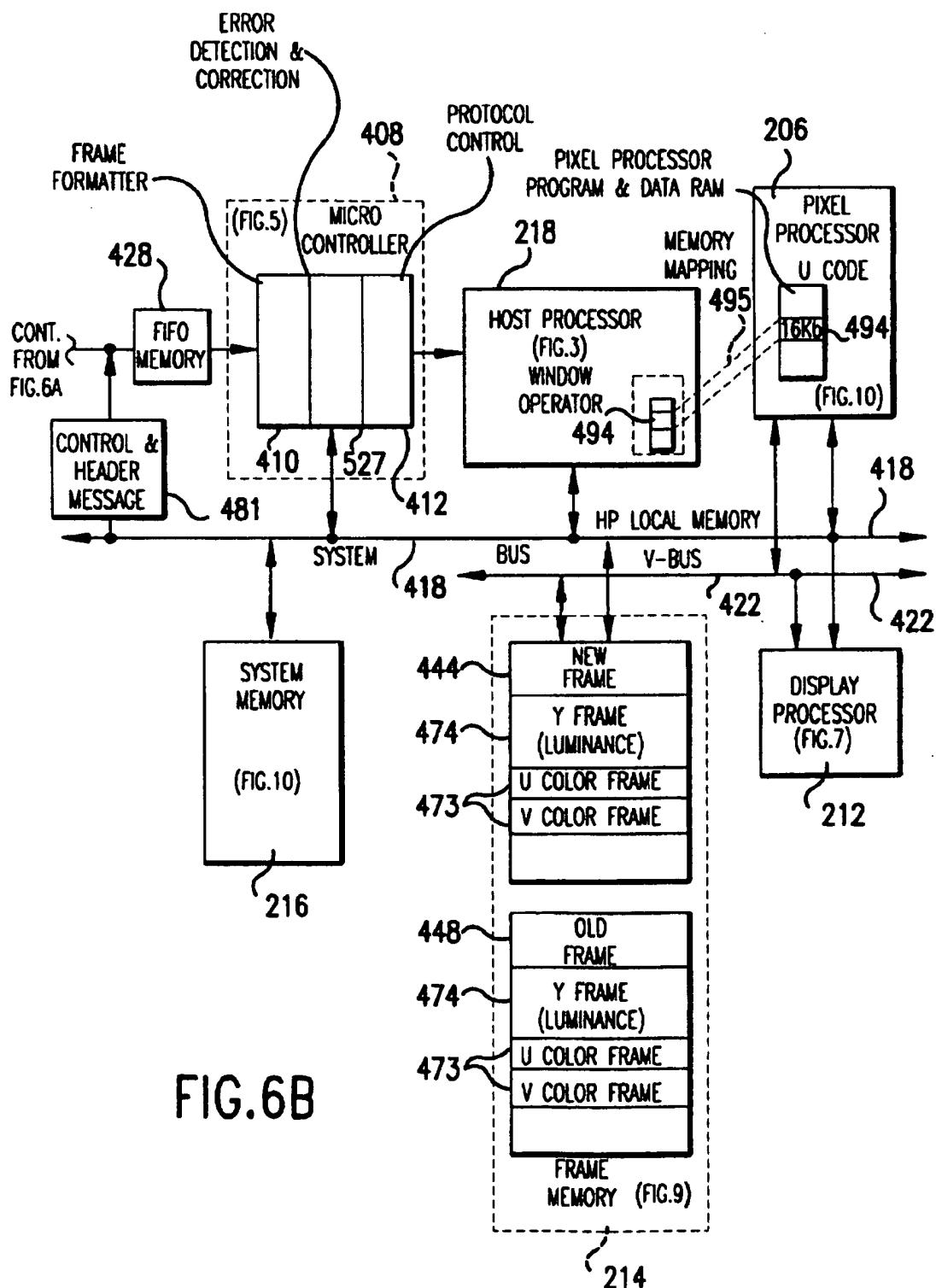


FIG.6A



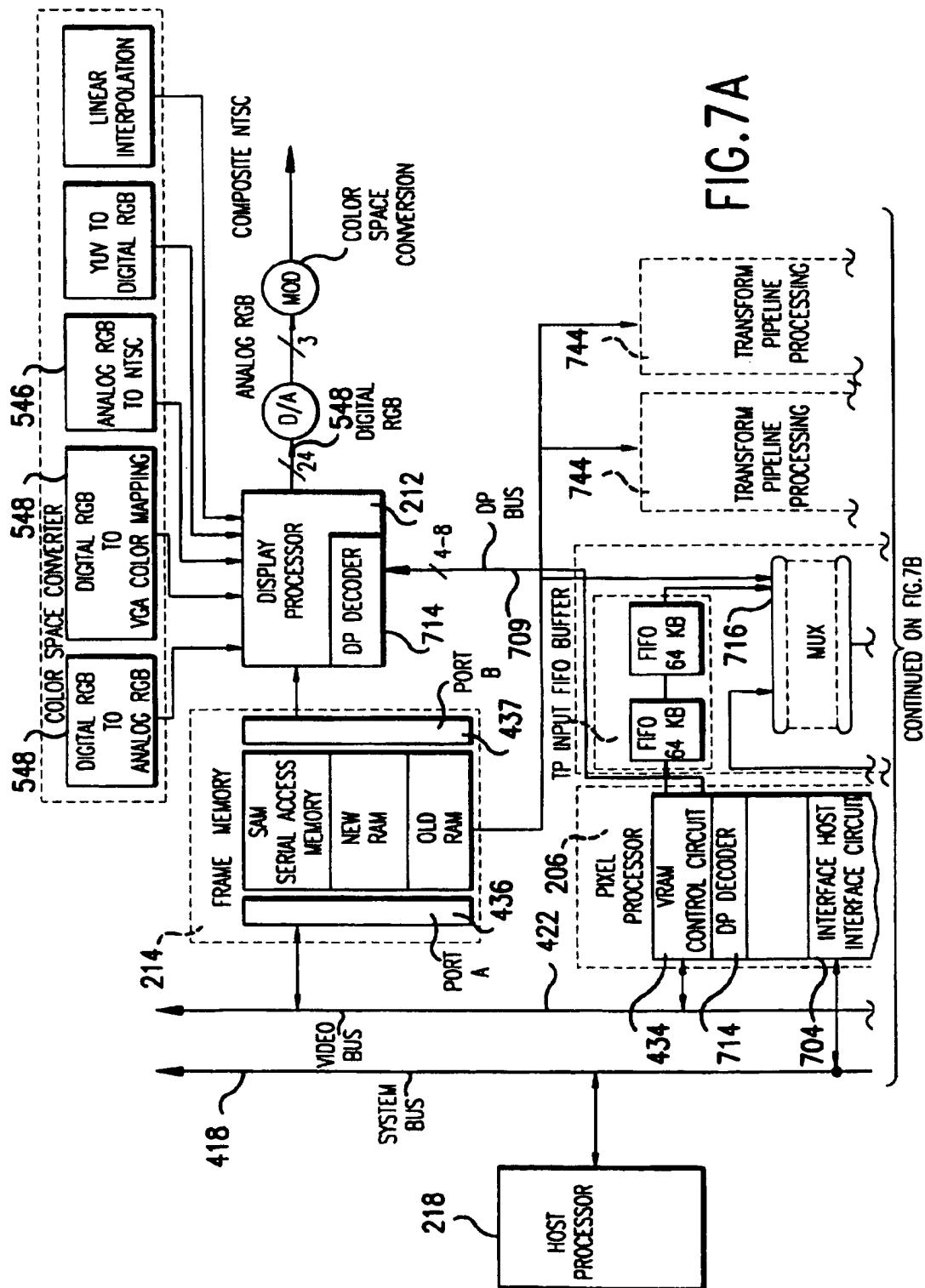


FIG. 7A

CONTINUED ON FIG. 7B

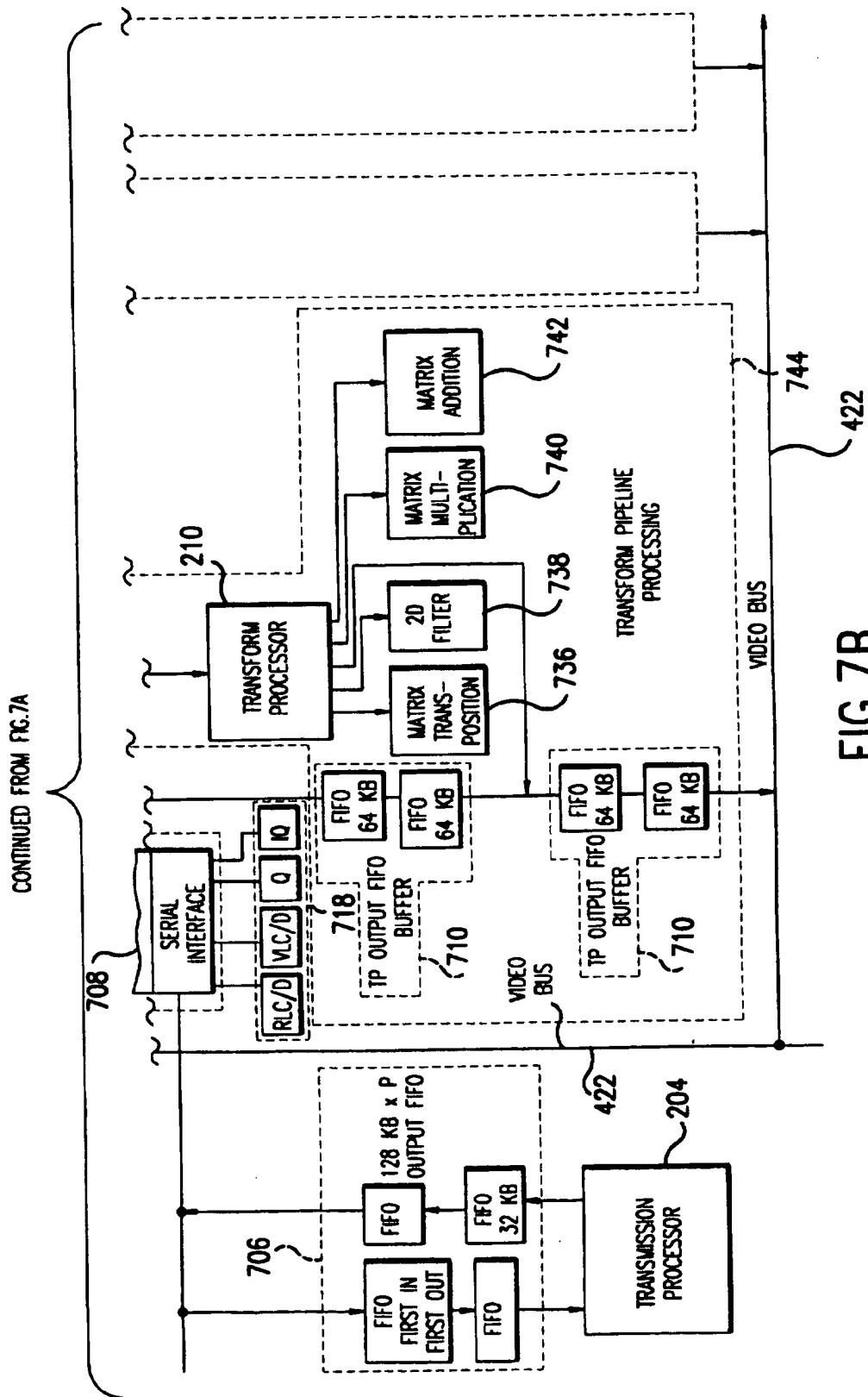


FIG.7B

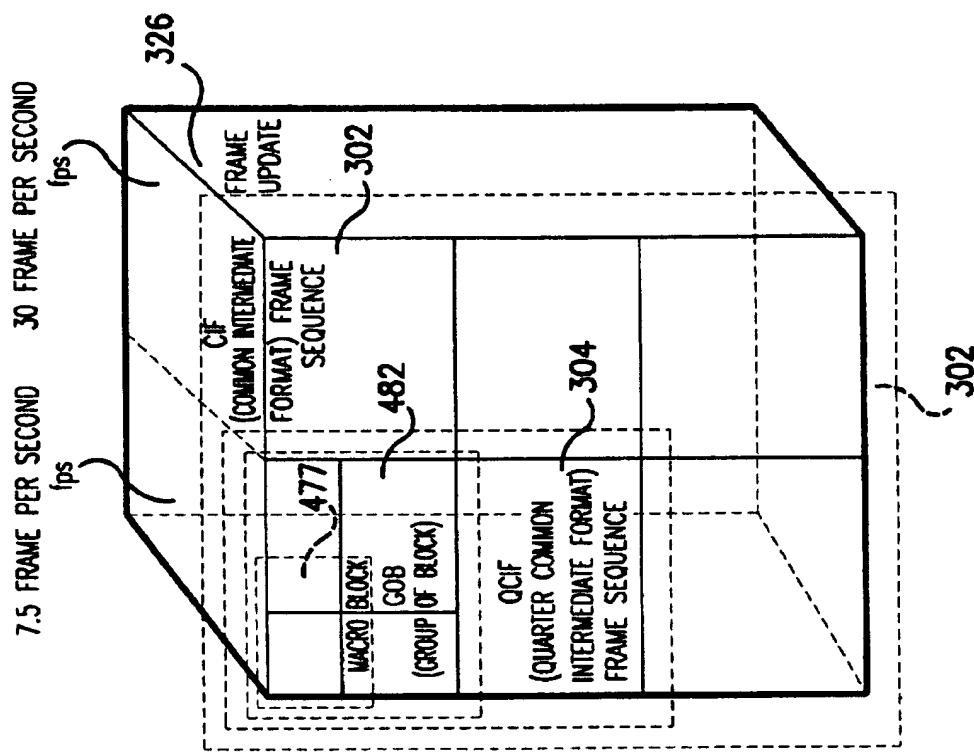
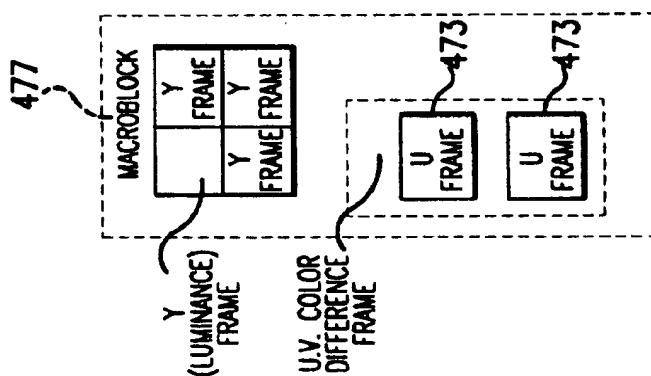
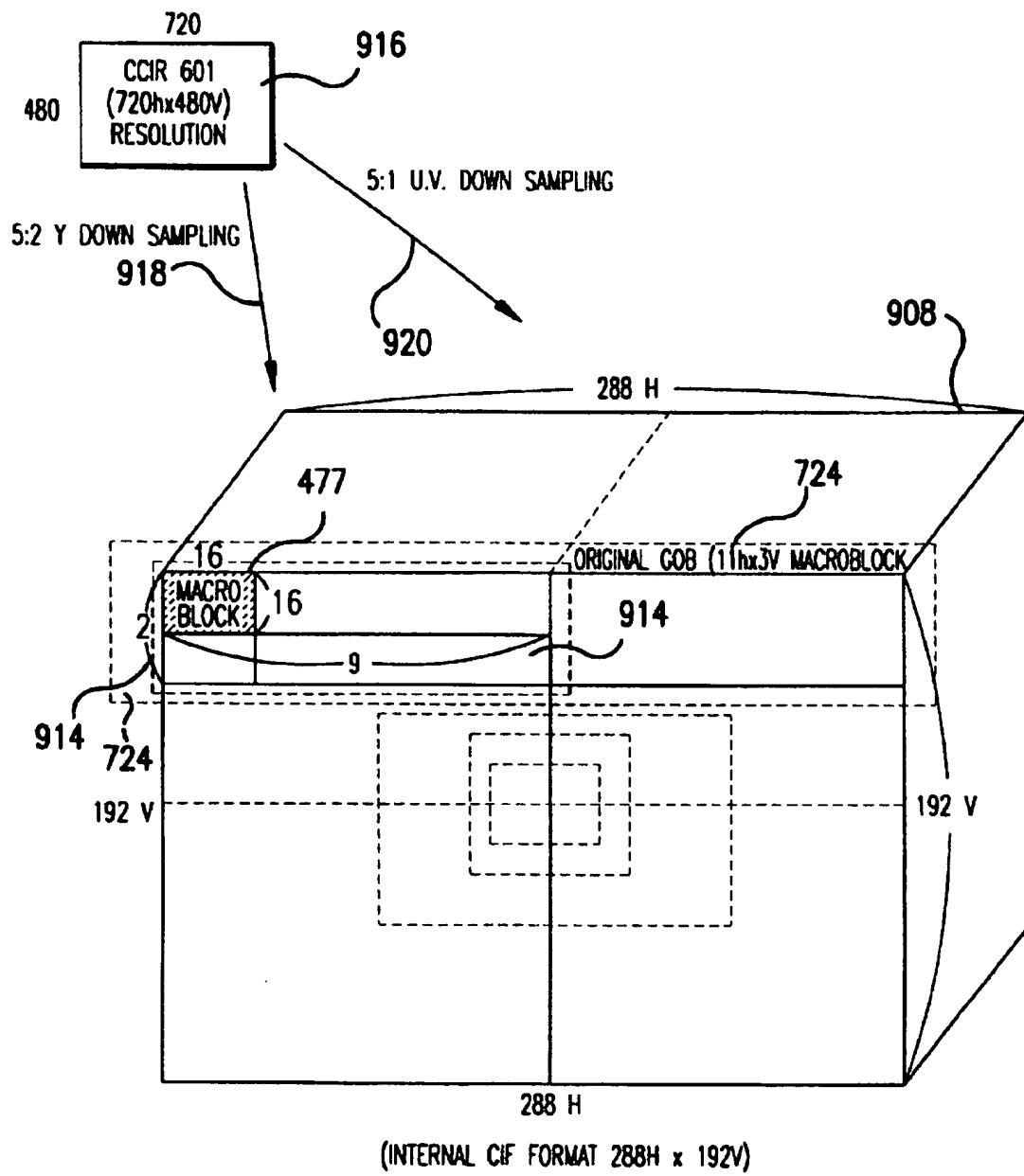


FIG. 8

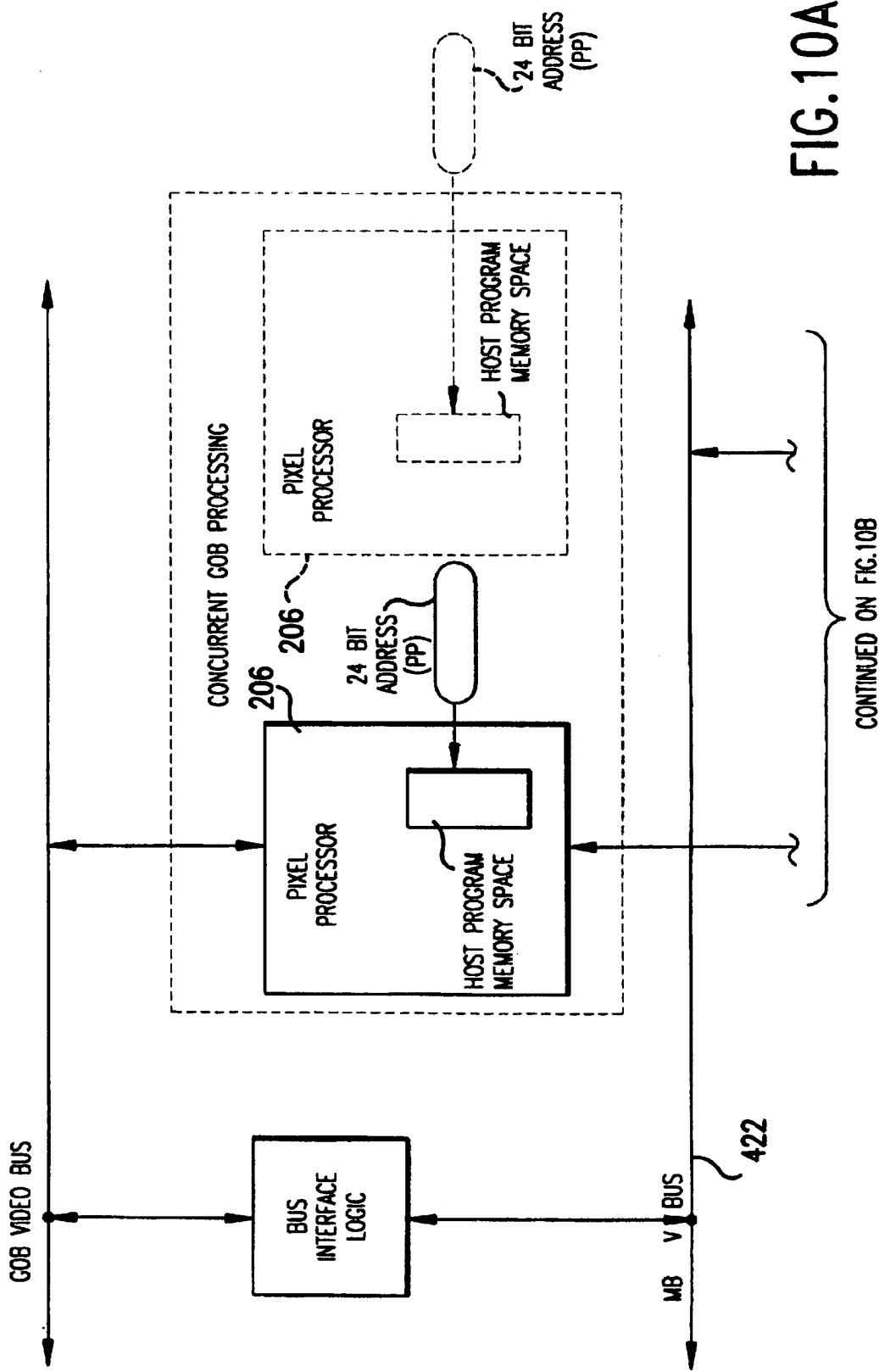




	INTERNAL CIF	STANDARD CIF
MACRO BLOCK	SAME	16x16 PELS
GROUP OF BLOCK	9x2=18 UB'S	11x3=33 UB'S
CIF FRAME	SAME	2x6=12 COB'S
QCIF FRAME	SAME	1x3=3 COB'S

FIG.9

FIG. 10A



CONTINUED FROM FIG.10A

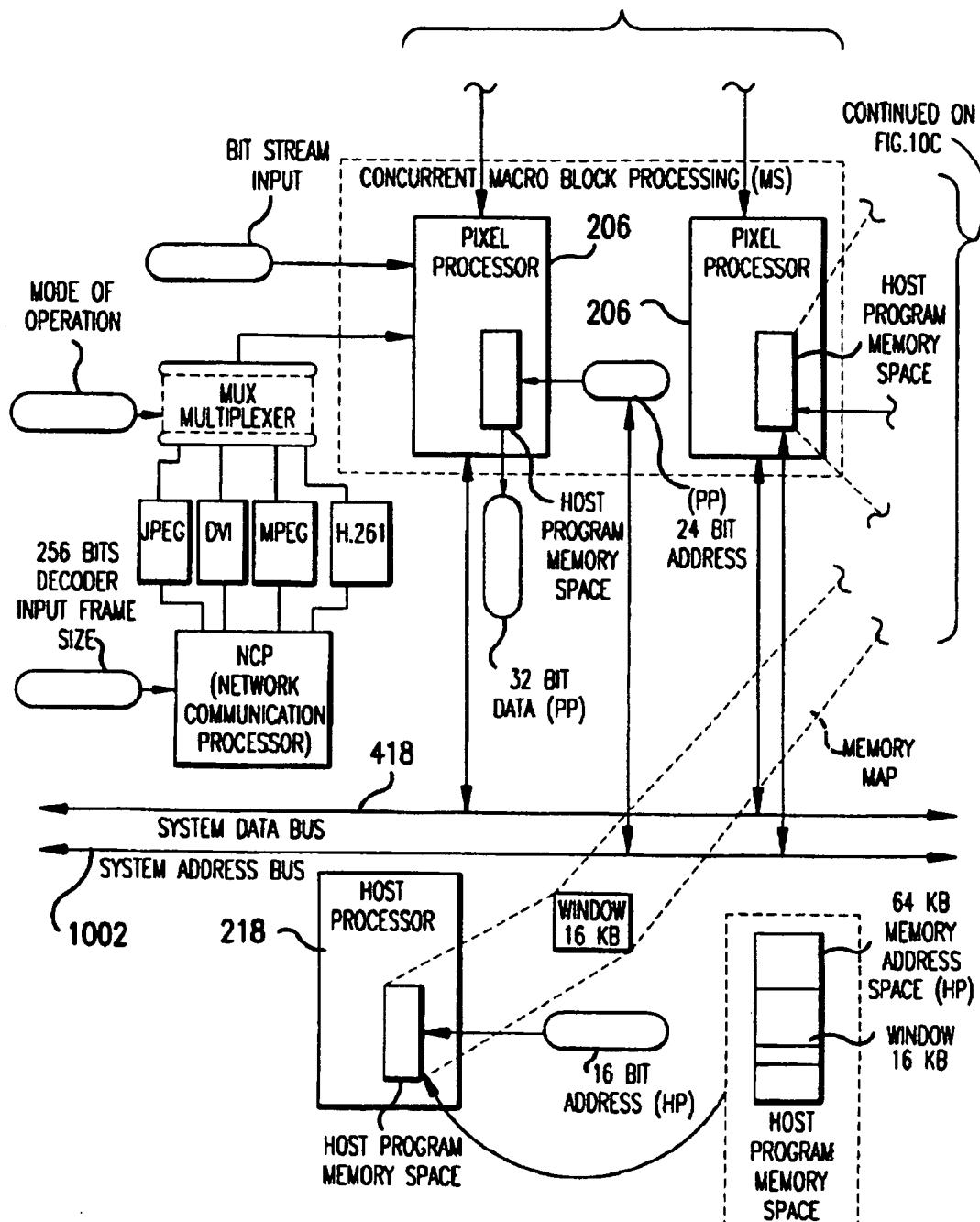
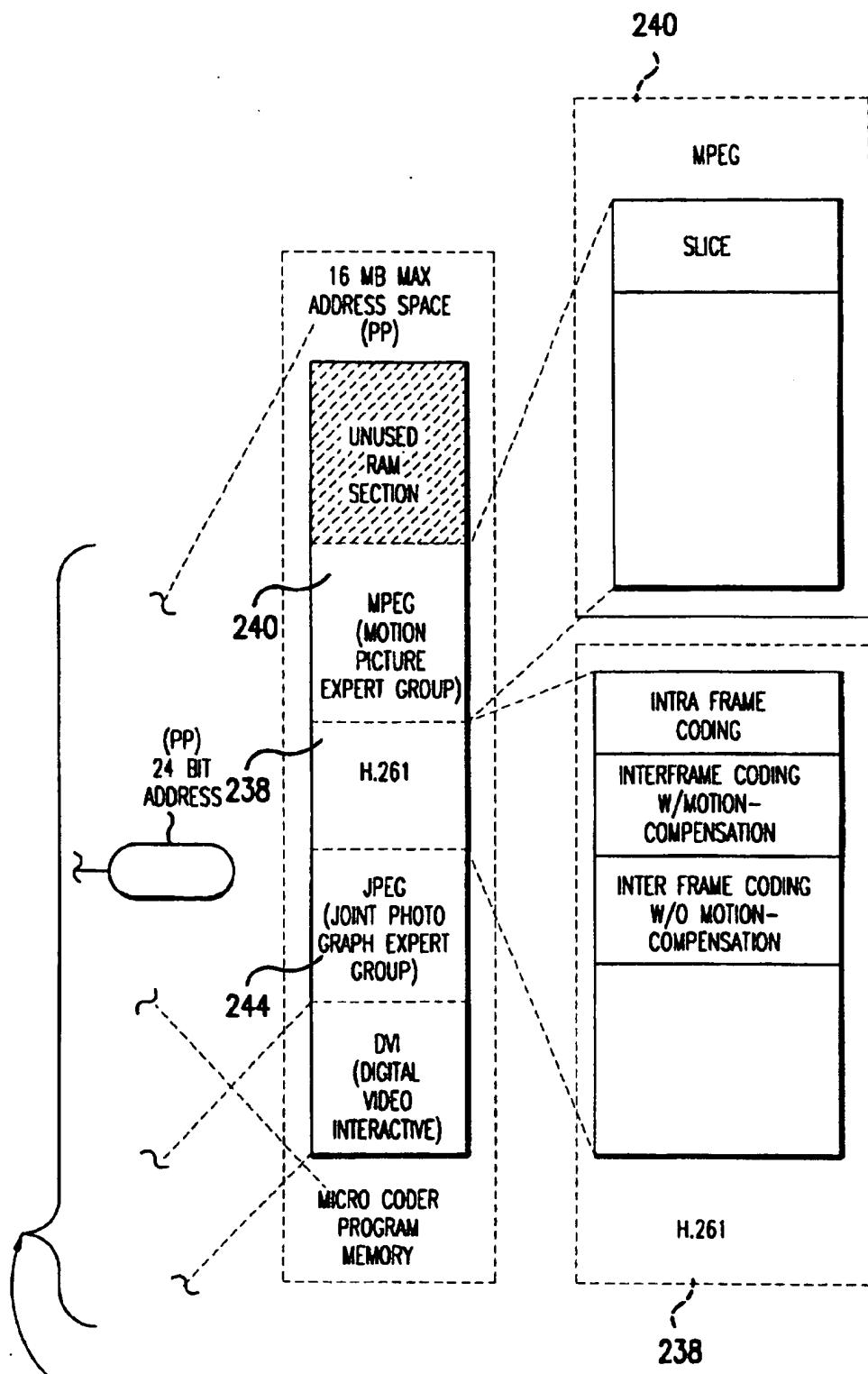


FIG.10B



CONTINUED FROM FIG.10B

FIG.10C

FIG. 11A

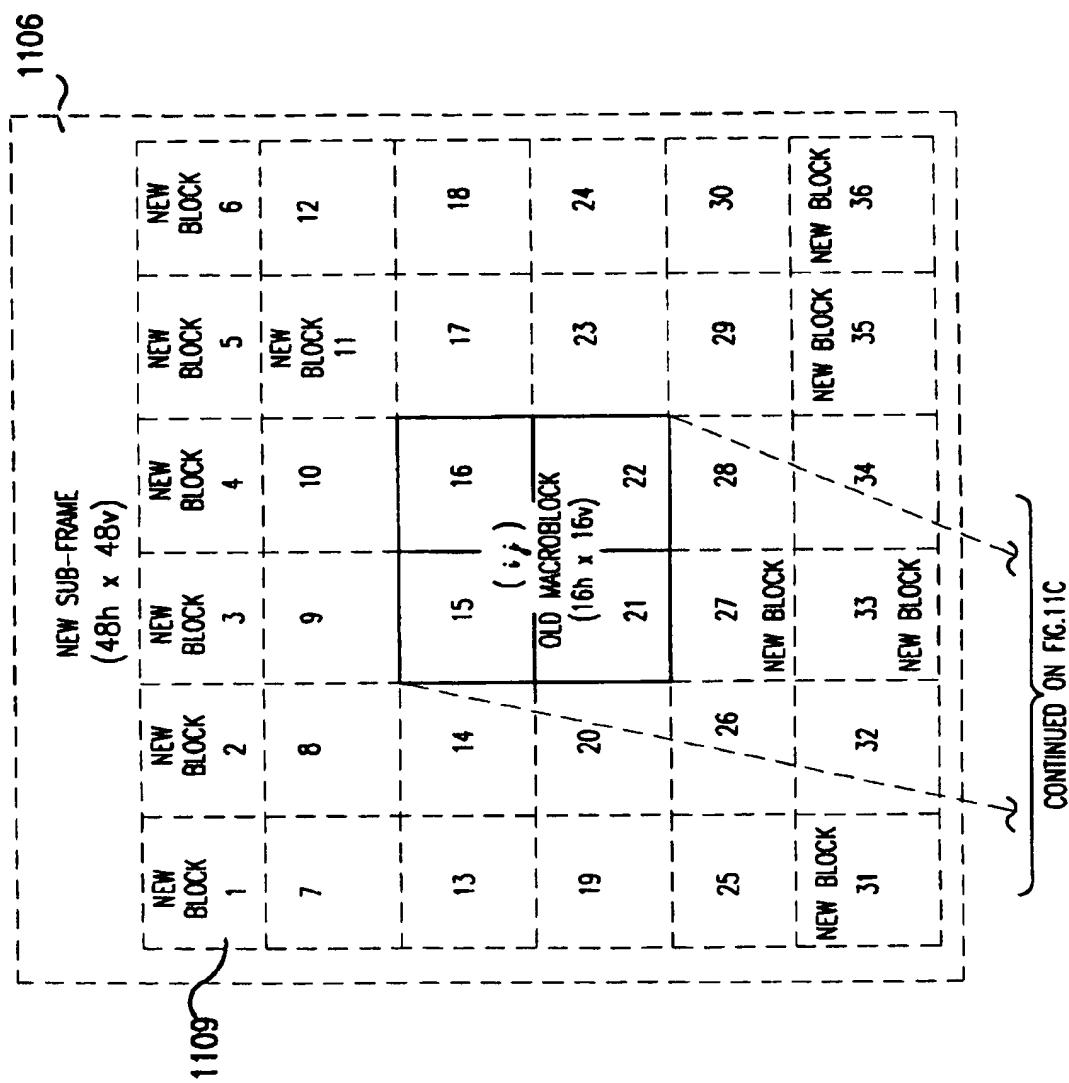
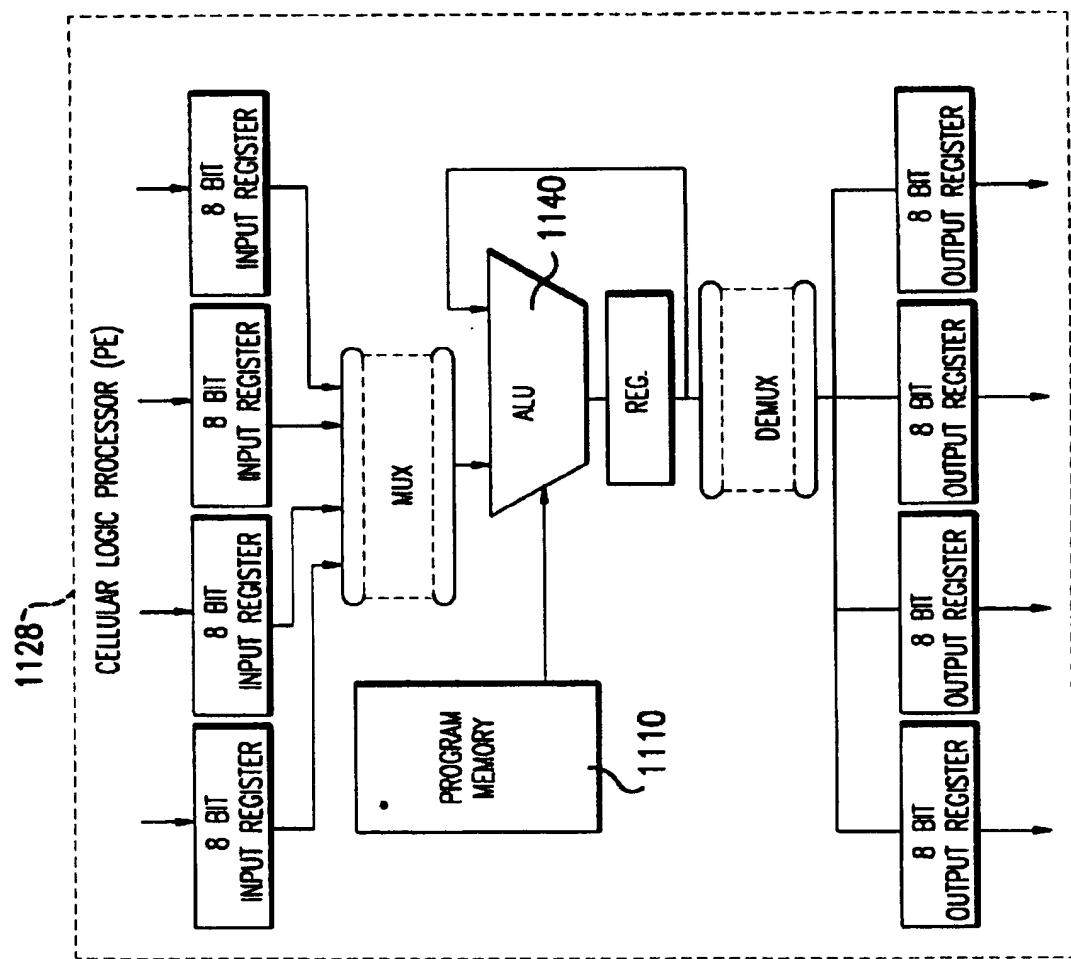
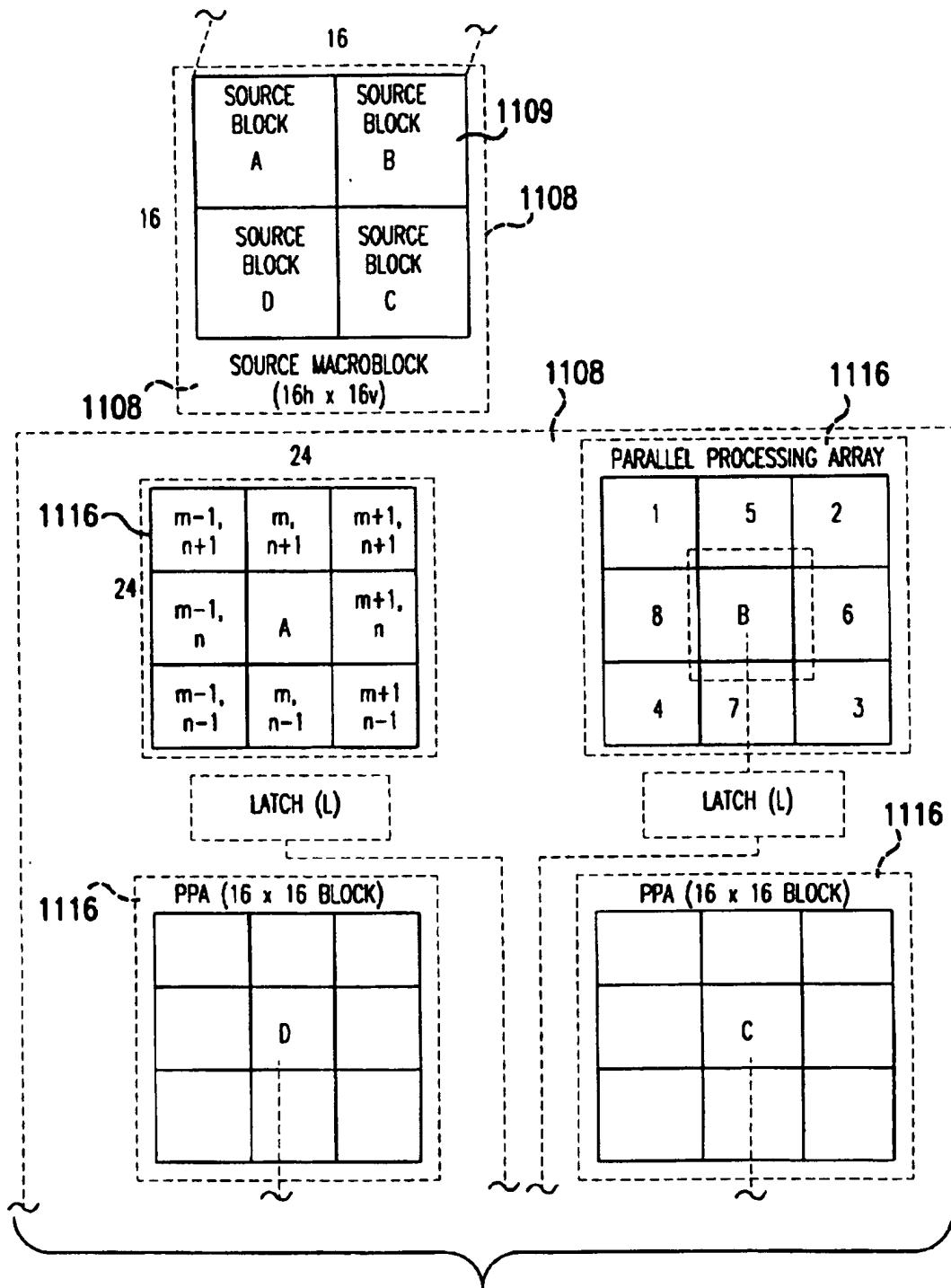


FIG. 11B



CONTINUED FROM FIG.11A



CONTINUED ON FIG.11D

FIG.11C

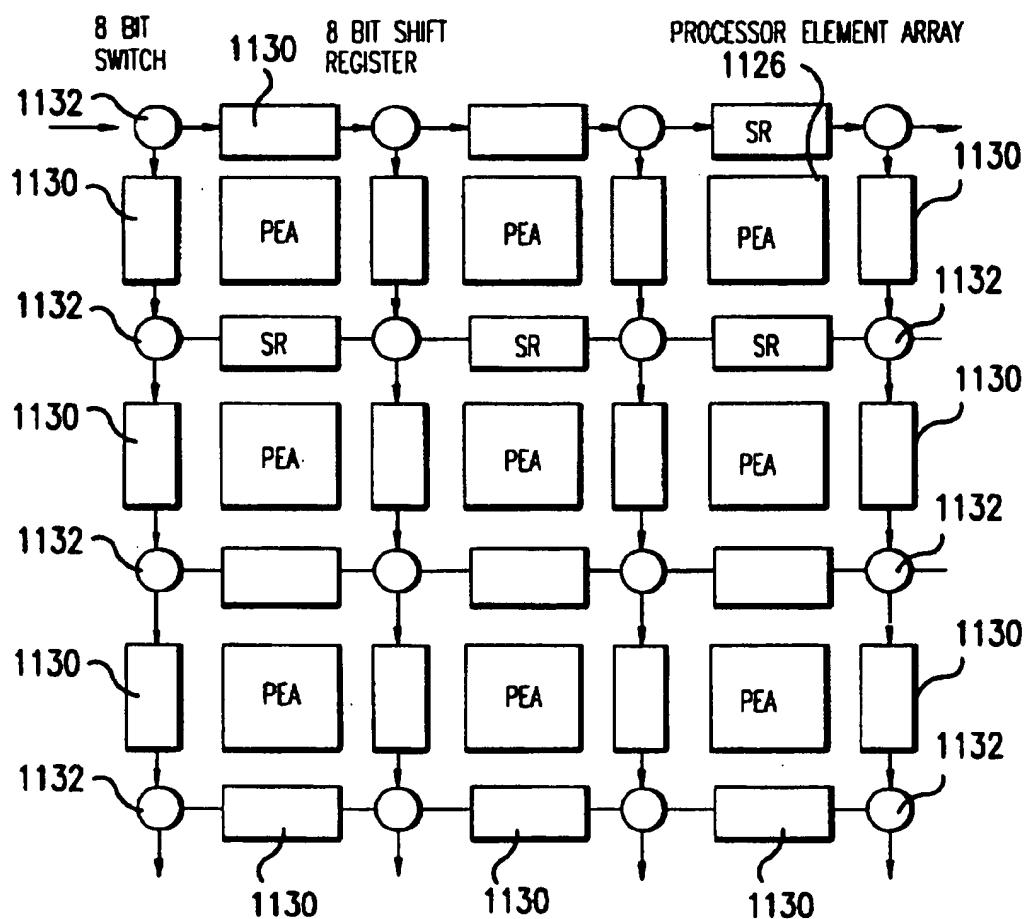
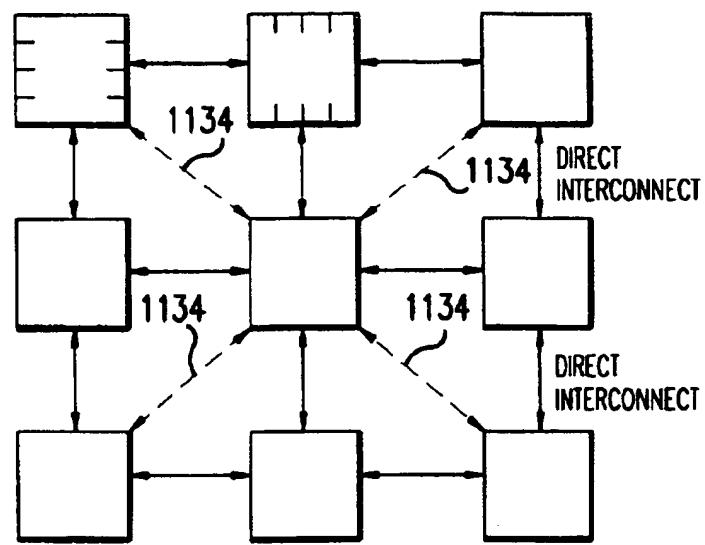


FIG.11D

CONTINUED FROM FIG.17C

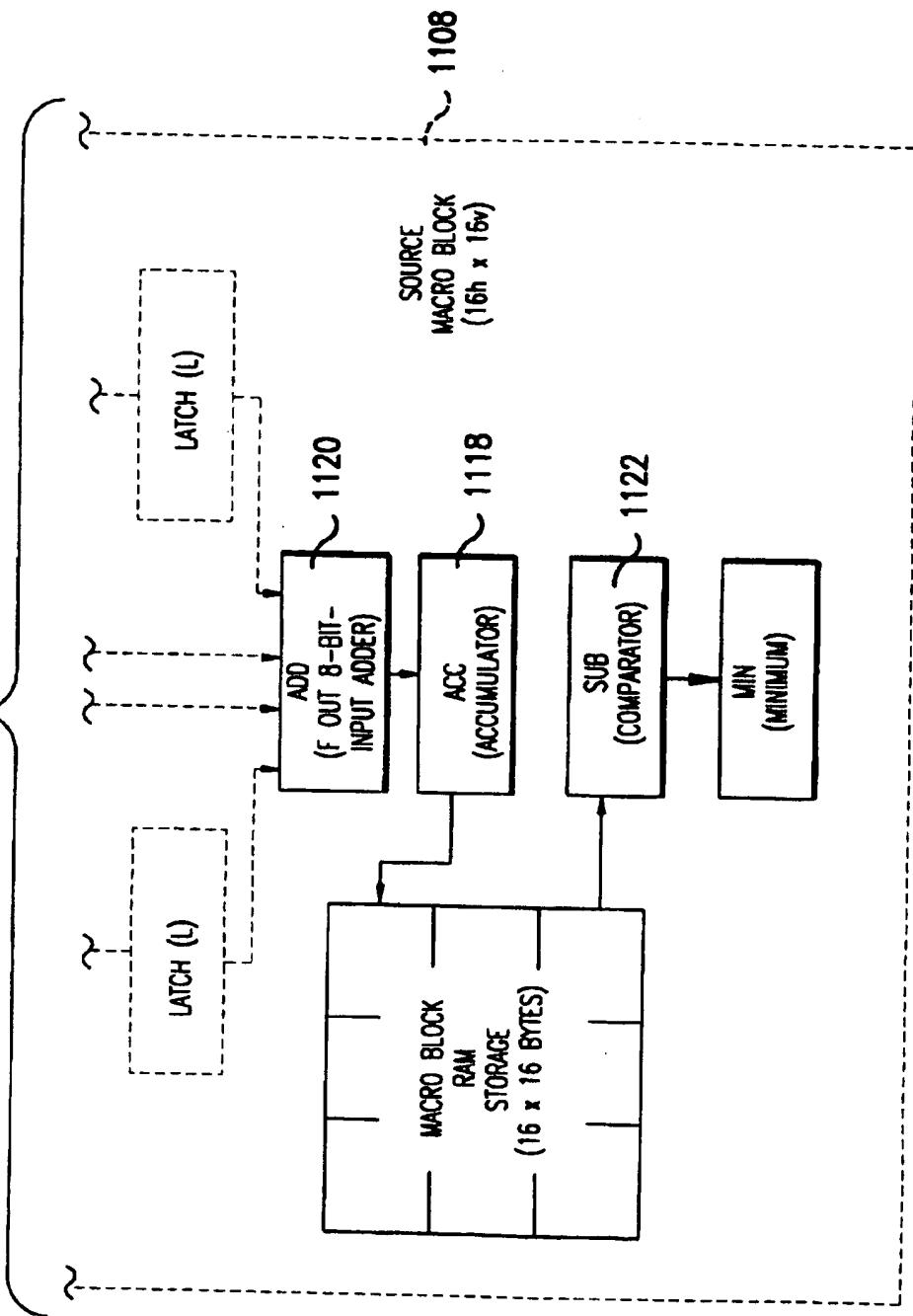


FIG.11E

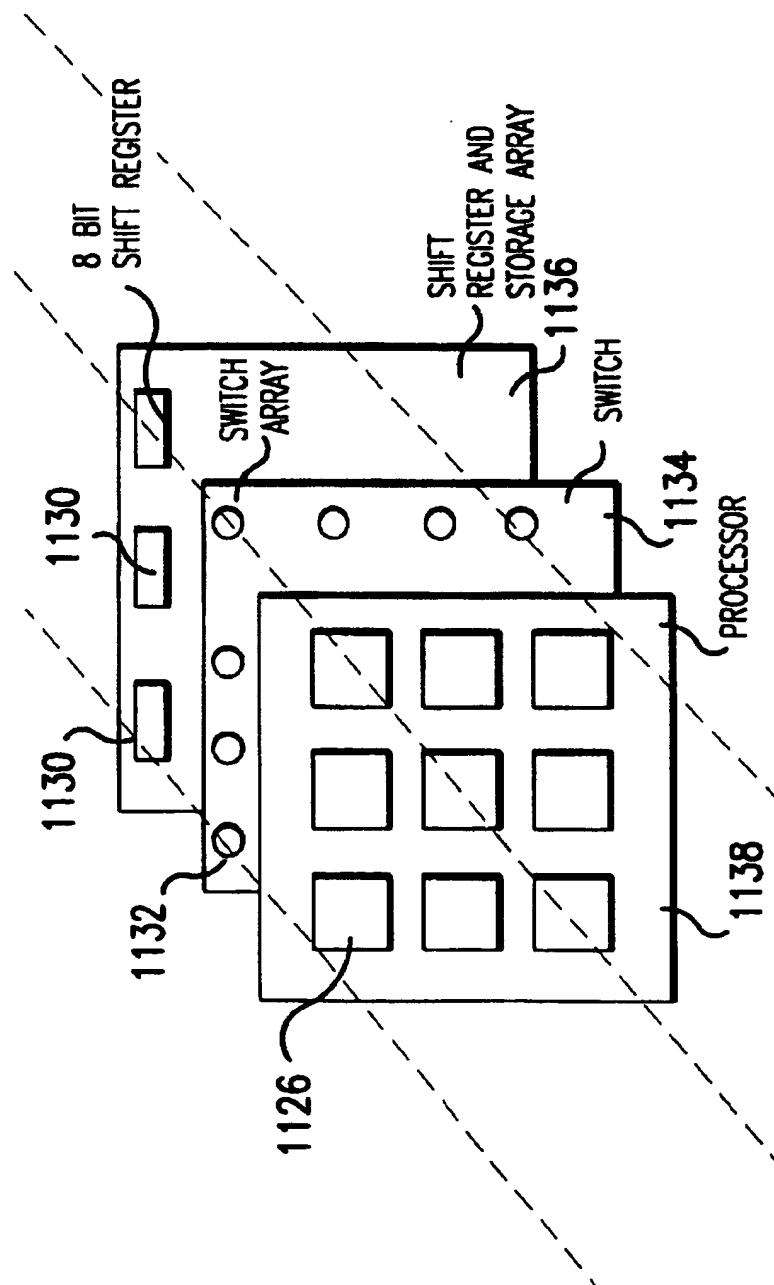


FIG. 11F

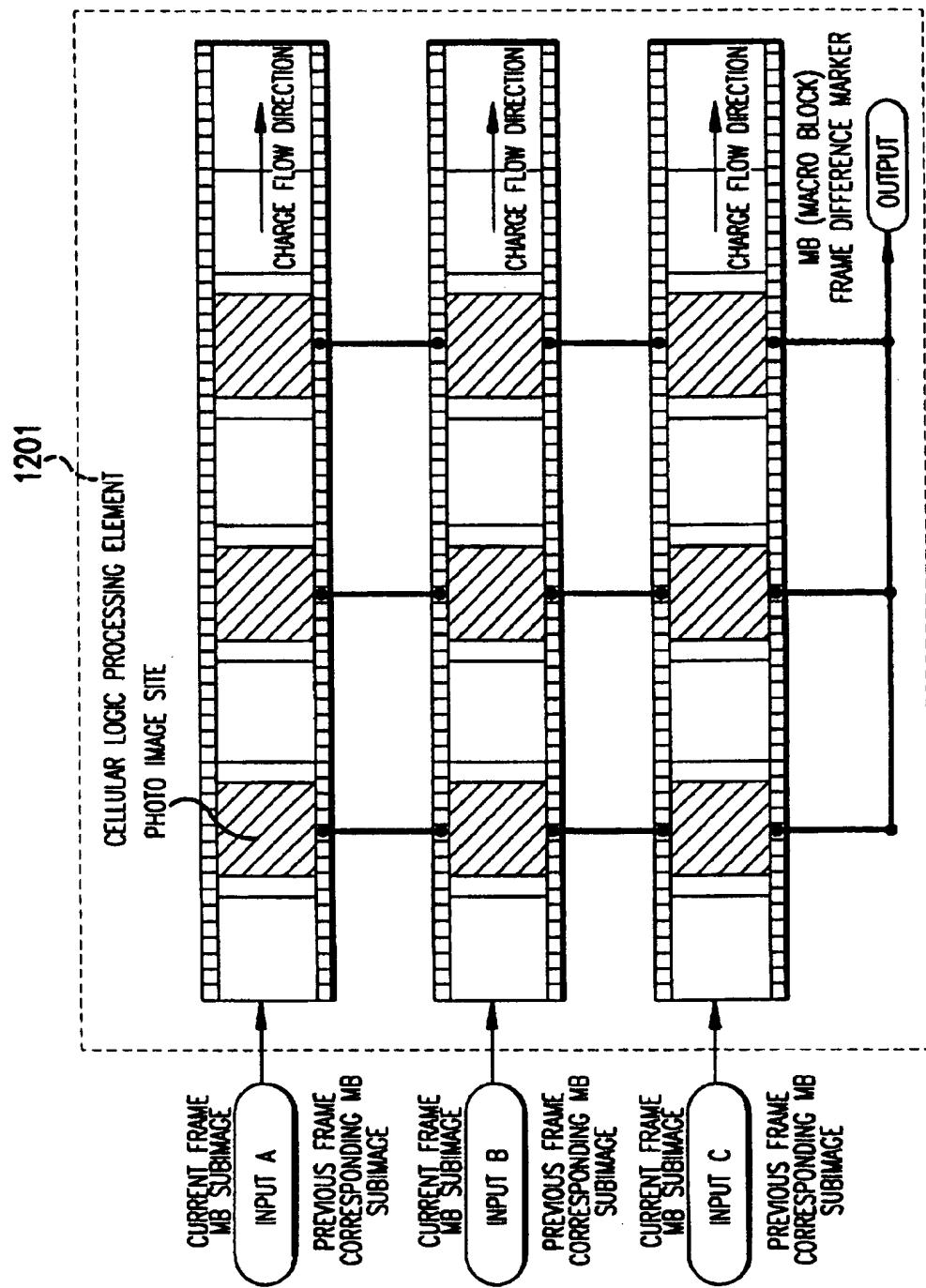


FIG. 12A

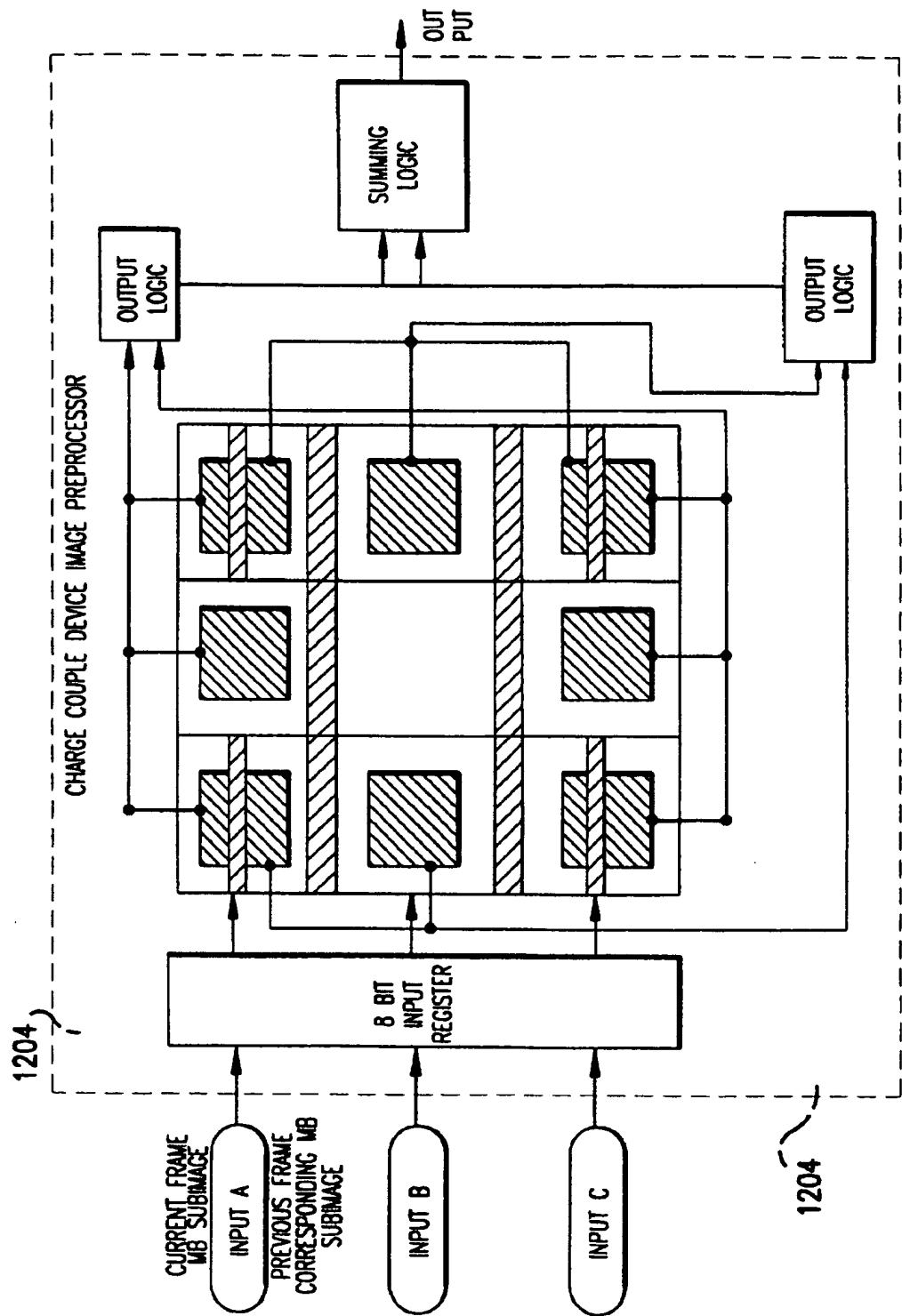


FIG.12B

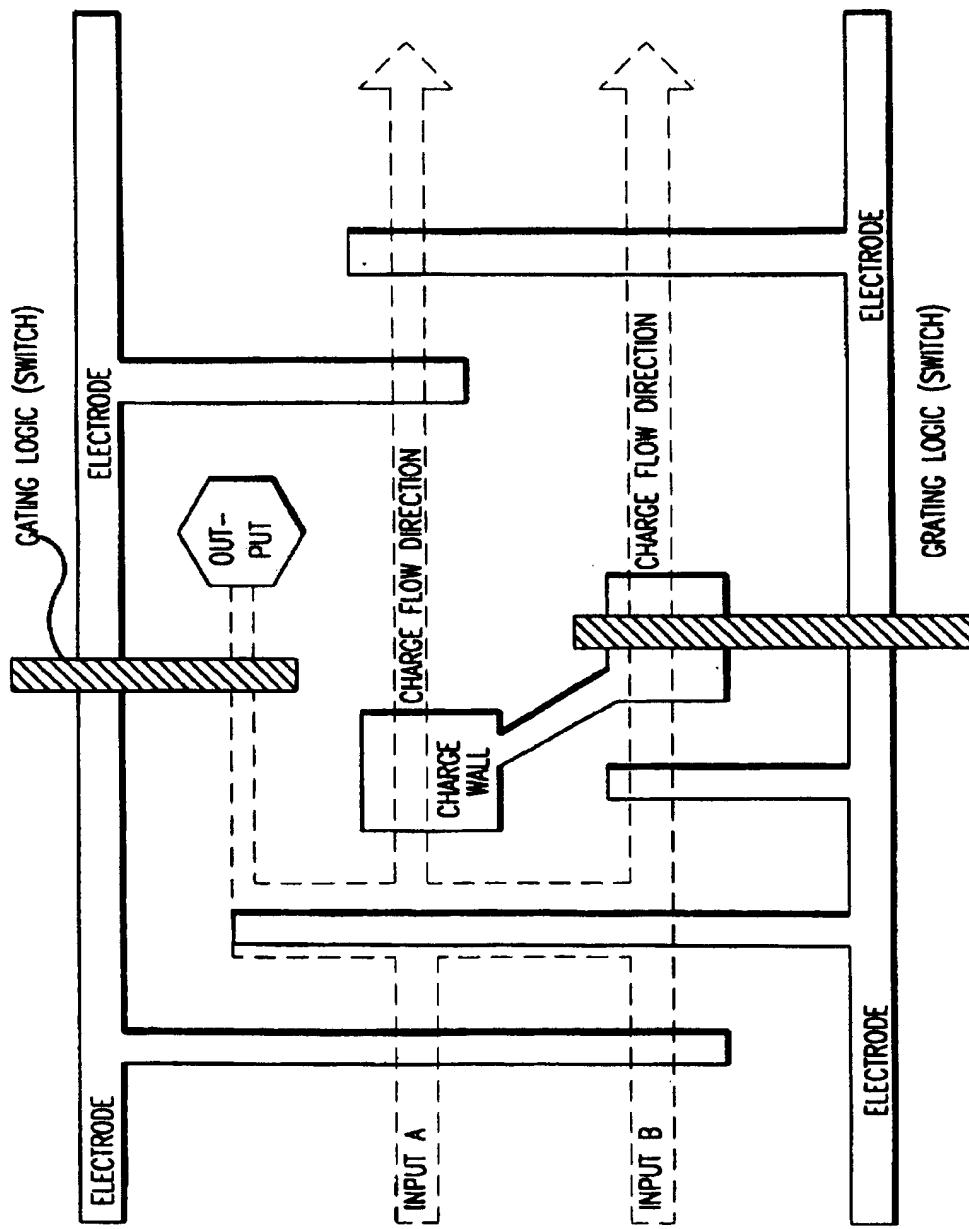


FIG. 12C

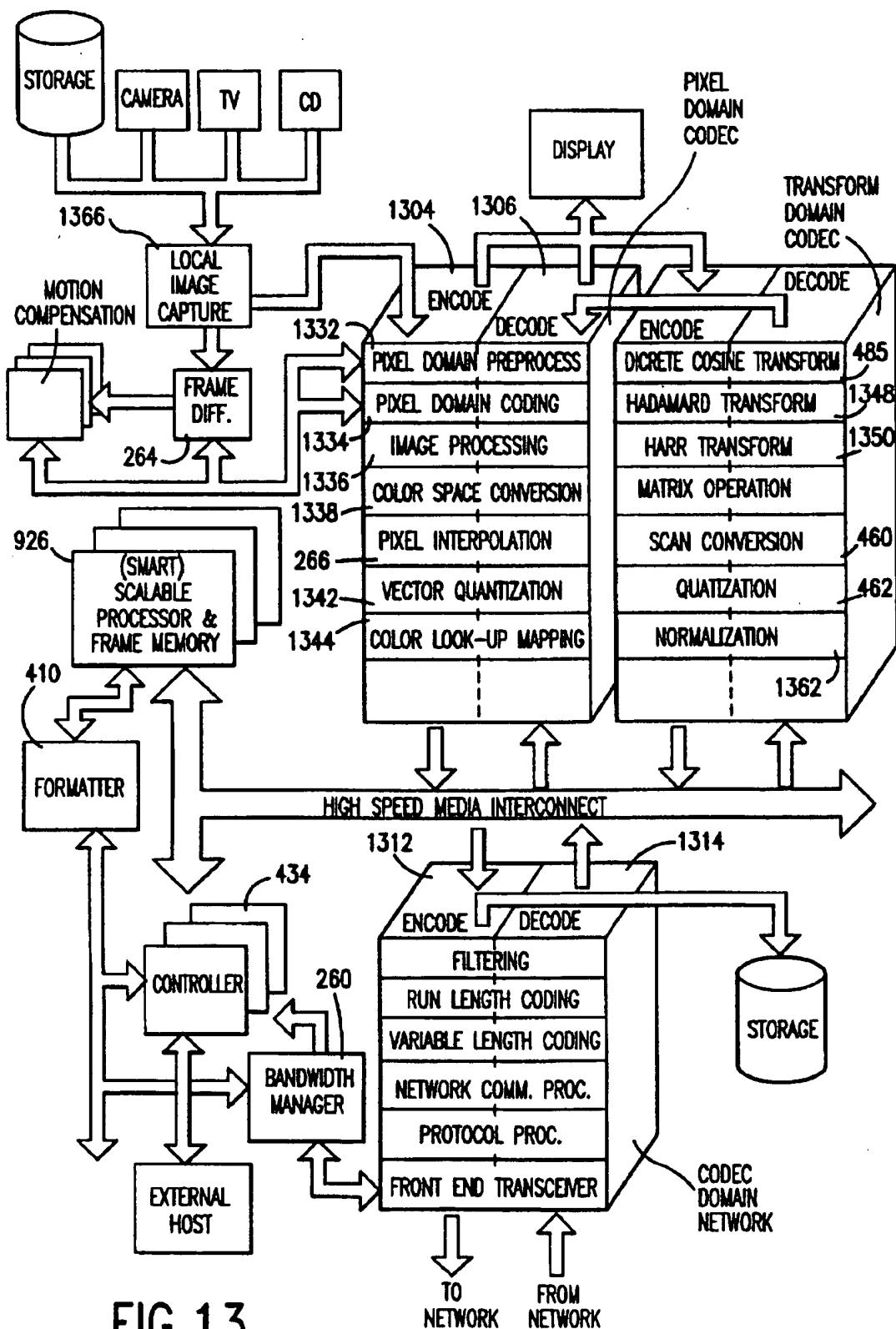


FIG.13

**METHOD AND APPARATUS INCLUDING
SYSTEM ARCHITECTURE FOR
MULTIMEDIA COMMUNICATION**

This is a continuation of application Ser. No. 08/356,486, 5 filed Dec. 15, 1994, now abandoned.

FIELD OF INVENTION

The present invention relates to a method and apparatus for improving the efficiency of electronic communication and, in particular, to a method and apparatus which can communicate with available electronic desk top equipment, such as personal computers, workstations, video cameras, television, VCR's, CD players and telephones and receive, store, process and send multiple forms of media information, such as sound, image, graphics, video and data, both digitally and algorithmically based on a plurality of selective band widths.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Technology allows the individual to communicate with others not only by the telephone, but also by telefax machines, personal computers and workstations utilizing modems and telephone lines and data and video information can also be stored and disseminated by means of videotapes, compact discs and television monitors.

There are methods and apparatus available which allow for large amounts of data to be reduced and transmitted in a very short amount of time, such methods and apparatus are known as compressing the data. Similarly, there are methods and apparatus available for enhancing the image quality of visual and graphic data that has been compressed and is now being displayed. For example, see U.S. Pat. No. 4,772,947 to Kono; U.S. Pat. No. 4,703,350 to Hinman; U.S. Pat. No. 4,727,589 to Hirose; U.S. Pat. No. 4,777,620 to Shimoni; U.S. Pat. No. 4,772,946 to Hammer; and U.S. Pat. No. 4,398,256 to Nussmier.

While the aforesaid patents teach various methods and apparatus for compressing and decompressing data and enhancing the image quality of the data, none of the aforesaid patents have directed themselves to the concept and structure of a method and apparatus which would communicate with and share resources among the telephone, personal computer or workstation, video screen and VCR to allow the individual to select and convey multiple forms of media information such as sound, image, graphics, data and live video in an efficient and effective architecture which would automatically adjust to available band widths and which would be capable of communicating in multiple band widths.

OBJECTS OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is to define an integrated process architecture which can accommodate communications, both transmission and retrieval, of all digitally-coded or algorithmic multimedia information.

Another object of the invention is to provide for a novel system architecture which is flexible and allows control of the variable communications band widths and allows for flexible combinations of digitally-coded multiple media information having application to teleconferencing or educational instruction.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide for a novel process architecture which not only allows for digital coding techniques, but also can interface with traditional analog storage or transmission techniques.

A still further object of the present invention is to provide for a novel, process architecture which allows the user to control program and select the appropriate media combination either before or during the communication session.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An apparatus and method for multimedia communications including voice, audio, text, still image, motion video and animated graphics which permits communications between multimedia transmitters and receivers and which is compatible with multiple standard or customized coding algorithmic signals such as H.261, MPEG, JPEG, EDTV or HDTV whereby multiple incompatible video coding equipment employing different video coding algorithms can now communicate with each other and which includes a reconfigurable memory for selectively adjusting the internal file format and size so as to be compatible with any available band width.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

These and other objects of the present invention will become apparent particularly when taken in view of the following illustrations wherein:

20 FIG. 1 is a pictorial illustration of the communication system;

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram illustrating the overall system methodology;

30 FIG. 3 is a schematic of the controller's internal operating mode for illustrating band width management;

FIG. 4 is a schematic of the internal circuitry of the multimedia communications assembly;

35 FIG. 5 is a schematic of the network communications processor and its design relationship to the transmission processor;

FIG. 6 is a schematic illustrating the communication between the host processor, system memory, pixel processor, frame memory and display processor;

40 FIG. 7 is a schematic of the video codec and display subsystem;

FIG. 8 is a schematic illustration of the standard CIF and QCIF memory format;

45 FIG. 9 is a schematic illustration of applicant's scalable memory array reconfigurable technique;

FIG. 10 is a schematic illustrating the pixel processor flexibility to various video coding algorithms;

50 FIG. 11 is a schematic of the motion processor subsystems;

FIG. 12A illustrates a programmable logic device employing cellular array logic architecture;

FIG. 12B illustrates the implementation of cellular logic processing;

FIG. 12C illustrates gating logic;

FIG. 13 is a schematic of the multimedia assembly.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

60 Referring to FIG. 1, there is shown a pictorial illustration depicting the communication devices available presently for the home or office. These include a VCR 102, CD player 103, telephone 104, television 106, personal computer 108 and fax machine 110. Each of these communication devices has a distinct function. The telephone can transmit and receive audio and data; a fax machine can transmit and receive text documents, a television can receive video broad-

casts and audio; and a personal computer can be used for many data processing applications. It is Applicant's intention to disclose an assembly which can physically communicate with these electronic devices to permit them to function complimentary with each other and to communicate with other electronic devices regardless of whether the other communication devices were digital or algorithmic and to code and decode automatically to the available band width. The communication is accomplished by a multimedia communications assembly 112, being of size and shape, similar to that of a VCR. The aforementioned electronic devices would interconnect with the multimedia communications assembly 112 to allow the user/operator to control, complement and utilize the functions of the electronic devices by means of the multimedia communications assembly 112.

FIG. 2 illustrates the overall system operation and methodology for the multimedia communications assembly 112. Assembly 112 makes it possible to exchange a multitude of different forms of media objects over a wide range of communication networks. Prior art has shown methods and apparatus to improve compression and decompression techniques for individual media types and individual band width ranges. However, since video coding algorithms are intrinsically incompatible with each other, there is need for an assembly 112 to provide a common interface whereby incompatible equipment can freely exchange media objects through interfacing with assembly 112.

The schematic methodology illustrated in FIG. 2 comprises the following major system components. They are a network communications processor 202; a transmission processor 204; a pixel processor 206; a motion processor 208; a transform processor 210; a display processor 212; a capture processor 220; a frame memory 214 and a host processor 218.

The design of the system architecture as described in detail hereafter is to gain the ability to interface with multiple types of media objects, including audio, still image, motion video, text and graphics. As illustrated in FIG. 2, graphics input might possibly be in the form of an RGB format 224; VGA format 226; XGA format 228; or SVGA format 230. Text media objects could be either in the form of a Group 3 format 232; Group 4 format 234; or ASCII format 236. Motion media objects may conform either to H.261 format 238; MPEG format 240; or other specialized formats 242. Still background media objects could be conforming either to JPEG format 244 or other specialized formats 234. Input audio media objects could be conforming to CD audio format 246; voice grade audio 248 or FM audio format 250.

Each media object within a category, namely, audio, still image, motion video, text and graphics would be imported to a multiplexer 252 dedicated to each category in order to identify the input signal and then be directed to a dedicated overlay 254 for each category of media object. The overlay 254 provides the ability for the assembly, disassembly, deletion, addition and modification of a selected group of multimedia objects. The input signals, be they audio, still image, motion video, text or graphics, are converted into computer object-oriented language format for encoding into a frame memory 214 as described hereafter. This conversion before storing into frame memory 214 in cooperation with the major components of the system described hereafter, permit the compilation of selected input signals which have been stored in the frame memory 214 to be assembled, interpreted and translated to other system formats with relative ease as a result of the intelligent memory management capability inherent in this design.

The system architecture provides for an interface which will enable multiple incompatible video coding equipment employing different video coding algorithms to communicate. This is accomplished through a scalable frame memory architecture reconfigurable technique (SMART) described in FIG. 9.

In simplistic terms to be described in detail hereafter, the design of assembly 112 allows host processor 218 to identify the types of input articles during the import stage, the host processor will then instruct the reconfiguration circuit 256 and the scaler circuit 258 to provide the required down-sampling ratio. The media article being imported can then conform or be reduced to the internal file format during the import stage. The reverse is true during the exporting stage when the media article in the internal file can be enlarged and made to conform to the appropriate algorithm for the exporting stage. As a result of our smaller internal file size, the real time performance requirement of our pixel processor 206, graphics processor 222, transform processor 210 and motion processor 208 is reduced. Further, the speed and size of the frame memory 214 is also proportionately reduced. This design allows various coding algorithms to be micro-coded at pixel processor 206.

Assembly 112 also optimizes the video coding for specific compression ratios in order to meet specific band width requirements. In order to adjust the band width to meet the various communication network requirements, band width controller 260 receives the band width requirement from the network communication processor 202, the band width controller 260 will then instruct the host processor 218 to develop the appropriate compression ratio in order to meet the real time performance requirements. Band width controller 260 will also interface with transmission processor 204 in order to import and export the media article at the appropriate band width. Assembly 112 can program the network communication processor 202, the transmission processor 204 and the display processor 212 to provide the various types of communications interfaces.

The internal operation modes of host processor 218 permit it to adapt to different compression ratio requirements and network band width requirements. As an example, the following are some popular network band width interfaces:

1. Communicating over an analog phone line employing V.32 modem, 9,600 bit per second (bps) band width is required, a quarter common immediate frame (QCIF) format is displayed at 7.5 frames per second (fps).

2. Communicating over a digital ISDN D channel at 16 kilo bits per second (kbs). The user has two options, either two quarter common intermediate frame (QCIF) formats can be displayed at 7.5 frames per second or one quarter common intermediate frame can be displayed at 15 frames per second.

3. Communicating over an analog phone line whereby 19,200 bit per second band width is required. The user has two options, either two QCIF (common intermediate frame) formats can be displayed at 7.5 frames per second or one QCIF (quarter common intermediate frame) can be displayed at 15 frames per second.

4. Communicating over switched 56 kilo bits per second digital network. Quarter common intermediate frames with three quality level options will be updated at 15 frames per second.

5. Communicating over a single ISDN B channel over an ISDN basic rate interface network, four quarter common intermediate frames will be concurrently updated at 15 frames per second.

6. Communicating over a dual ISDN B channel in a ISDN basic rate interface network, quarter common intermediate frames will be transmitted at 30 frames per second.

7. Communicating over a 384 kilo bits per second ISDN H1 network, common intermediate frame Will be transmitted at 15 frames per second.

8. Communicating over a 1.544 kilo bits per second T1 network, common intermediate frames (CIF) will be transmitted at 30 frames per second.

As a result of the aforesaid plurality of band widths, it is necessary for the multimedia assembly to continuously monitor the processor and network band width availability and to simultaneously determine the amount of compression or decompression that is required with respect to the data in frame memory 314 to be transmitted. Due to the variable band width or throughput requirement for each transmission network, only dedicated processor approaches have been shown in the prior art to meet a specific band width performance. For example, three video conferencing techniques are required at the 112 Kbs, 384 Kbs and 1.544 Mbs band width range. The multimedia assembly disclosed herein, includes different transceiver pairs for each specific network type. The system architecture disclosed herein, and in particular, host processor 218 in conjunction with band width controller 260 unit, scaler 258 and reconfiguration unit 256, can continuously adapt to a variety of network and processor band width changing situations, for example, noisy local line condition and network traffic congestion. This is possible as a result of the scalable memory architecture which permits the continuous reprogramming of the internal file format of frame memory 214 so that it is suitable for the specific band width requirement at that moment.

During the interframe coding mode 278, after the incoming media articles are received, the appropriate frame size 262 will be adjusted first, frame by frame difference 264 will then be calculated. For consecutive frame processing, an appropriate motion vector 270 can be derived. For selective frame processing, due to the difficulty to identify a suitable motion vector 270, interpolation techniques 266 can be employed to simulate frame difference signal. Decision logic 272 is employed to analyze situation and make a final decision. In case of scene changes, system will be reset to intraframe coding mode for further processing. A detailed design of the motion processor 208 is further shown in FIG. 11.

Although our invention entitled "multimedia", we have been mostly focused on "new hardware and software techniques" for the "motion video". In addition, we have also shown new techniques how to integrate (overlay) motion video with other media article in order to create a complete multimedia presentation. Since there have been plenty of prior arts showing techniques to handle other media, i.e., CD audio, fax, telephone, computer graphics, or digital camera. Also because the performance requirement for these media types are much less demanding. Therefore, the encoding and decoding of other media types in our invention can be easily implemented in general purpose computer hardware and software, embedded hardware controller, or special purpose digital-signal processors.

FIG. 3 is a schematic illustration of the controller's operating modes for band width management based upon the international compression standard CCITT H.261. Based upon this standard, each common intermediate format frame (CIF frame) 302 consists of twelve (12) groups of blocks and each group of blocks would consist of thirty-three (33) macro-blocks with each macro-block consisting of six (6)

blocks (4 Y's and 2 U/V's). Each block would consist of 8x8 pixels and each pixel would consist of an 8 bit value. The quarter common intermediate format frame (QCIF frame) 304 would consist of three groups of blocks and these would be identical to those of the CIF's 302.

In multimedia assembly 112, host processor 218 has eight (8) different network interface modes 306. The first interface mode 310 is for 9.6 Kbs analog modems. The second interface mode 312 is for 16 Kbs ISDN D channel. The third interface mode 314 is for 19.2 Kbs high speed analog modems. The fourth network interface mode 316 is for 56 Kbs digital network (PSDN). The fifth network interface mode 318 is for 64 Kbs ISDN single B channel. The sixth network interface mode 320 is for dual B channel 128 Kbs ISDN BRI network. The seventh network interface mode 322 is for 384 Kbs ISDN H1 network and the eighth network interface mode 324 is for 1.544 Mbs ISDN PRI or T1 network.

Host processor 218 also has programmable frame updating rate capability 326. Frame updating rate 326 provides host processor 218 with five options. They can be either 30 frame per second (fps); 15 fps; 10 fps; 7.5 fps or 1 fps.

The standard frame update rate 326 for each network interface mode 306 would be 1 fps for first network interface mode 310; 1.5 fps for second network interface mode 312; 2 fps for third network interface mode 314; 6.5 fps for fourth network interface mode 316; 7.5 fps for fifth interface mode 318; 15 fps for sixth and seventh interface mode 320 and 322, respectively and 30 fps for eighth interface mode 324.

In FIG. 3, we have established 30 fps of frame update rate 326 as the default update rate for CIF format 302 transmission and 7.5 fps as the default update rate for QCIF format 304 transmission. The compression ratios illustrated in FIG. 10 and described hereafter are for this default update rate.

The CIF format 302 system throughput requires 4.6 mega bytes per second (MBS). The QCIF format 304 requires 288 kilo bytes per second. Assuming we use 8 kilo bytes per second as the measuring base for real time video transmission over fifth network interface mode 318, the CIF format 302 system would require a compression ratio of 576:1 based upon the CCITT H.261 compression standard. The QCIF format 304 would require a 36:1 compression ratio. Similarly, with respect to the other network interface modes 306, the compression ratios would be as follows: The eighth network interface mode 324 would require a CIF format 302 compression ratio of 24:1 whereas QCIF format 304 would require a 1.5:1 compression ratio; seventh network interface mode 322 would require a CIF format 302 compression ratio of 96:1 and a QCIF format 304 ratio of 6:1; fourth network interface mode 316 would require a CIF format 302 compression ratio of 658:1 and a QCIF format 304 ratio of 41:1; third network interface mode 314 would require a CIF format 302 compression ratio of 1,920:1 and a QCIF format 304 ratio of 120:1; the first network interface mode 310 would require a CIF format 302 ratio of 3,840:1 and a QCIF format 304 ratio of 240:1.

As a standard operation in Applicant's multimedia assembly, single QCIF format 304 will be employed for the digital first through fifth network interface modes 310, 312, 314, 316 and 318, respectively. Double QCIF format will be employed for sixth network interface mode 320 and single CIF format 302 or quadruple QCIF format 304 sequences will be utilized for the seventh and eighth network interface modes 322 and 324.

The advantages of Applicant's multimedia communications assembly 112 and its operation and capabilities will be

discussed hereafter. FIG. 4 illustrates a schematic view of the multimedia communications assembly 112. It consists of the following major system components. They are a network communications processor 202; a transmission processor 204; a pixel processor 206; a motion processor 208; a transform processor 210; a display processor 212; a capture processor 220; a frame memory 214 and a host processor 218. These system components can be implemented either using custom integrated circuit devices, a programmable integrated circuit; microprocessor; microcontroller; digital signal processor or software, depending upon the specific system performance requirement.

The system components are interconnected through a system host bus 418 and a high speed video bus 422. The system host bus 418 allows the host processor 218 to control access and communicate with the system components such as the network communication processor 202, the transmission processor 204, the pixel processor 206, and the frame memory 214. The video bus 422 interconnects the frame memory 214 with such components as the capture processor 220, the display processor 212, the transform processor 210, the pixel processor 206 and the motion processor 208 to perform high speed video signal processing functions. Both the system host bus 418 and the video bus 422 are bi-directional parallel buses.

Due to the real time performance requirements for the high speed video frame processing, two system-wide interconnections are implemented. The first is the video pipeline 424 consisting of a direct interconnection between the capture processor 220, pixel processor 206, motion processor 208, transform processor 210, frame memory 214 and display processor 212. The second system interconnect 342 consists of the direct interconnection between the network communication processor 202, transmission processor 204, host processor 218 and pixel processor 206. In order to facilitate these interconnect operations, first in, first out memory devices 428 are inserted where appropriate.

The frame memory 214 can be implemented either in static random access memory 430 or video random access memory 434. The static random access memory 430 is easier to implement, but at a higher cost. The video random access memory (VRAM) 434 is less expensive, but slower than the static random access memory 430 and requires a controller 434 to update the memory array. The video random access memory 434 is provided with two access ports 436 and 437 providing access to the random accessible memory array. This is done since many video coding algorithms employ frequent use of the interframe coding 440 to reduce band widths. Namely, only the frame difference signal 442 will be transmitted. Therefore, the twin memory accesses are required to store both the new frame 444 and the old frame 448 and to facilitate frame differencing operations 450. In this design, the pixel processor 206 serves as the bus master 420 for the video bus 422 by having the video random access memory (VRAM) controller 434 function positioned within the pixel processor 206 core. This allows pixel processor 206 the ability to control video bus 422 and to access video random access memory pixel storage for pixel level operations 454. Pixel processor 206 also is equipped with the bit level manipulation functions 456 such as variable length coder and decoder (VLC) 458, scan format converter 460 and quantization converter 462. These permit the pixel processor to utilize international video coding algorithms for communicating as discussed hereafter.

The capture processor 220 can decode various types of analog video input formats and convert them (e.g., NTSC 464, PAL 466, SCAM 468, or SVHS 469) to CCIR 601 470

YUV 471 4:2:2 472. The ability of the capture processor 220 to decode the aforesaid formats provide for a convenient interface between the multimedia communications assembly 112 and the television 106, VCR 102 or video camera 465.

The CIF 302 formulated YUV 471 signals will first transfer out of the capture processor 220 and store in the frame memory 214. The luminance (Y) signal 474 will be loaded into the motion processor 208 to perform motion estimation 475. A motion vector 476 will be developed for each macro block 477 and store in the associated frame memory 214 location. The difference between the new and old macro blocks will also be coded in discrete cosine transform (DCT) coefficients 478 using the transform processor 210. Pixel processor 206 will perform a raster to zig-zag scan conversion 460, quantization 462 and VLC coding 458 of the DCT coefficients 478 for each macro block 477 of luminance 474 and chrominance 473. The transmission processor 204 will format the CIF 302 frames into the CCITT H.261 238 format and attach the appropriate header 481 information. As an example, a CIF frame 302 will partition into twelve groups of blocks 482 and each group of blocks 482 will consist of thirty-three macro blocks 477 and each macro block 477 will be composed of four luminance signals 474, and one U & V signal 473. The network communication processor 202 will provide the control interface to the telecommunications network 480 or to a microwave link 483.

On the receiving side, the serial compressed video bit stream 484 will be received from the network communication processor 202. The bit stream will be converted from serial to parallel and decode the appropriate header message 481 using the transmission processor 204. The information will then be sent to the frame memory 214 through pixel processor 206. Pixel processor 206 will then perform a variable length decoder 458, zig-zag-to-raster scan conversion 460 and dequantization 463. The YUV 471 macro block 477 of DCT coefficients 478 will be sent to frame memory 214 through pixel processor 206. Pixel processor 206 will then send YUV 471 macro blocks 477, one at a-time to the transform processor 210 to perform inverse DCT operation 485. The YUV 471 difference 450 will then be added to the old signal 452 to conform to a new YUV pixel 446 for each macro block 477. The display processor 212 will then perform YUV 471 to RGB 224 conversion and generate analog signal from the RGB 224 or then generate an 8 bit VGA 226 color image through color mapping 486. The display processor 212 will then provide a convenient interface to various displays such as television 106, personal computers 108 or monitor.

For ease of interface, host processor 218 also provides for a high speed small computer system interface (SCSI) 488 with the external host 487 such as a personal computer or work station. The advantage of the small computer system interface 488 is that it provides a system independent interface between the external host 487 and the multimedia communications assembly 112. Since only simplified control messages 489 are required to pass between the two hosts, modifications to the system to provide for various operation formats such as DOS 491, UNIX 490 or Macintosh 492 can easily be accomplished. The high speed small computer system interface 488 will also allow the transmission of video sequences between the two hosts.

In the case of high speed digital network communication, the communication pipeline is employed to facilitate real time frame formatting 410, protocol controlling 412, transmission and decoding. The host processor 218 is the bus master 420 for the system bus 418. Consequently, host

processor 218 will be able to access to the frame memory 214 and/or system memory 216, and monitor progress through a windowing operation 494. The windowing operation 494 essentially allows a portion of the system memory 216 to be memory mapped 495 to the frame memory 214 so that the host processor 218 can use it as a window to view frame memory 214 status and operations in real time.

FIG. 5 illustrates the network communication processor 202 and its design relationship to transmission processor 204. Network communication processor 202 is comprised of an analog front end transceiver 514, digital signal processor/modem 516 and a buffer memory 518. These network communication processor 202 components are interconnected through a private NCP bus 520. The transmission processor 204 consists of a frame formatter 522, a protocol controller 524 and an error processor 526. The transmission processor 204 components and the buffer memory 518 are interconnected through another private X bus 528. The bit-serial D bus 530 facilitates the network communication processor 202 and transmission processor 204 communication through digital signal processor/modem 516 and frame formatter 522 sub-systems. The private NCP bus 520, D bus 530 and X bus 528 are designed to facilitate effective data addressing and transfer in between the sub-system blocks. Furthermore, the buffer memory 518, digital signal processor/modem 516 and protocol controller 524 are interconnected to the host processor 218 through system bus 418.

The specific requirement of the bus design, which may include address 510, data 512 and control 502 sections is dependent upon the data throughput 504, word size 506 and bus contention 508 considerations. The network communications processor 202 implements the DTE 536 function while the host processor 218, and transmission processor 204, perform the DCE 532 function. This allows the proper pairing of the DCE 532 and DTE 536 interface to a local customer premises equipment 534 so as to perform conference control 538, store and forward 540 or band width management 542.

Within the network communication processor 202 sub-system, digital signal processor/modem 516 is the local host controller 544. Analog front end 514 consists of an analog to digital converter (ADC) 546 and a digital to analog converter (DAC) 548. The analog-to-digital converter 546 samples and holds the analog input signal 550 and converts it to a digital bit stream. The digital-to-analog converter 548 buffers the digital output bit streams and converts them into an analog output signal. The analog front end is the front end interface to the telephone network 480 from the system. The output digital bit stream from the analog-to-digital converter 546 is then transferred to the buffer memory 518 for temporary storage. The digital signal processor/modem 516 will access this information through buffer memory 518 to perform line coding functions. Inside the digital signal processor/modem 516 is a programmable digital signal processor 552. Digital signal processor 552 is programmable allowing for easy implementation of line coding 554 and control 556 functions for many of the analog front end 514 functions.

Within the transmission processor 204 sub-system, the frame formatter 522 first received the incoming information frame 558 and header message 481 from the digital signal processor/modem 516 and identifies the proper receiving video coding algorithm types 560. Protocol controller 524 then takes over and starts the appropriate protocol decoding 562 procedures. Once the control frame 564 and information frame 558 header information are fully decoded, the information frame 558 is sent to the error processor for error

checking and correction. Corrected bit streams are then converted from serial to parallel form using serial to parallel converter 568 and are stored in the first in and first out buffer 428 for further processing. The first in, first out buffer 428 is designed into four 32K bits section. Each section allows for storage of 32K bits which is the maximum allowance of a compressed CIF frame. Therefore, 128K bits in the first in, first out buffer allows double buffering and simultaneous transmitting and receiving of the incoming and outgoing video information frames.

In order to accommodate the various network environments, the network communications processor is designed to operate in the following specific speeds.

9.6 Kbps (Kilo bits per second), 19.2 Kbps, 56 Kbps, 64 15 Kbps, 128 Kbps, 384 Kbps, 1,544 Mb/s (mega bits per second) and 2.048 Mbps. HP will offer three options as the standard modes of operation. In mode 2, single CIF or four QCIF sequences will be offered at 384 Kbps and higher. In mode 3, two QCIF sequences will be offered simultaneously at 128 Kbps.

When line conditions degrade, the analog front end 514 will become aware of the degradation as a result of incoming frame synchronous signal 570. Analog front end 514 will then notify the digital signal processor/modem 516 and host processor 218. Host processor 218 will then switch from a standard operation to an exception operation mode. Host processor 218 has three options to lower the bit rate in order to accommodate and correct the degradation. Option 1 would be for the host processor 218 to notify the pixel processor 206 and select a coarser quantization level 572. Option 2 would be to drop the frame update rate and increase the interpolation rate 574. Option 3 would be to drop from CIF to QCIF 576. When the error processor 526 detects more than two single bit errors, the error processor 526 will notify the pixel processor 206 and host processor 218. Host processor 218 again has two options. Either pixel processor 206 can request for an retransmission or host processor 218 can delete the complete macro block 477 and wait until the next macro block is sent. Meanwhile host processor 218 will 40 send the old macro block 308 from the frame memory 214 and use it to update the display.

FIG. 6 illustrates the interactions between the front end communication systems and the host processor 218, system memory 216, pixel processor 206, frame memory 214 and display processor 212. These interactions are performed through system bus 418. The incoming video sequence 602 is first received by a front end demodulator 515. Network communications processor 202 and transmission processor 204 will decode the control message and header information 606. The pixel processor 206 and transform processor 210 will then transform these sequences from frequency domain to pixel domain and store same in the frame memory 214. The display processor 212 performs the appropriate interpolation to display the output video sequence at the selected 55 frame rate. Similarly, the outgoing video sequence 603 can be prepared through coding of the frame difference 442 for each macro block 477 to convert from pixel to frequency domain to transmit out through front end modulators 514.

Once the incoming video sequence 602 is received and 60 stored in the buffer memory 518 the control message and header 606 information will then be stored in a first in, first out memory 428 for further decoding by the network communications processor 202 and transmission processor 204. A self-contained micro controller 608 could provide the frame formatting 610, error processing 612 and protocol control functions 524. This would provide service at low bit rate applications up to 64 Kbs range. For higher speed

applications 16 bit or 32 bit high performance embedded micro controllers could be employed.

FIG. 7 illustrates a block diagram of the design of the video codec and display subsystem 702 and its interaction with the transmission processor 204 and host processor 218. The video codec and display subsystem 702 consists of pixel processor 206, transform processor 210, frame memory 214 and display processor 212. Pixel processor 206 is the host controller for the video codec and display sub-system 702. Pixel processor 206 is also the controller for the video bus 422. Pixel processor 206 communicates with the host processor 218 through system bus 418 using its internal host interface circuit 704. Pixel processor 206 also interconnects to transmission processor 204 through a first in, first out memory buffer 706 using its internal serial interface 708. Pixel processor 206 interfaces and controls frame memory 214 through video bus 422 using its internal VRAM controller circuit 434. Pixel processor 206 interfaces with motion processor 208 through video bus 422 and with display processor 212 through private DP bus using its internal display processor decoder 714. The pixel processor 206 also interfaces with transform processor 210 through first in, first out memory 707 and input multiplexer 716.

Pixel processor 206 is also required to perform time critical pixel domain video coder and decoder functions 718. These include variable length coder and decoder, run level coder and decoder, quantization and dequantization, zig-zag to raster or raster to zig-zag scan conversion.

Since most video coding algorithms employ frame differencing 450 techniques to reduce band width, only the frame difference signals 442 will require to be coded and decoded. Frame memory 214 is designed to store old frames 714 and new frames 712 at two discrete section. Old frame 714 being stored as the reference model while the difference between the new and old frames are being updated via a differencing signal 442 which will be either coded for transmission or decoded and added back to the old frame 714 for the reconstruction of new frame 309.

As an encoder, pixel processor 206 will retrieve from the frame memory 214 these frame differencing signals 442 in macro blocks 477. Transform processor 210 will perform the DCT (discrete cosine transform) function 716 to translate each of the Y, U, and V block from pixel to frequency domain. The pixel processor 206 will apply these discrete cosine transforms to the decoder or encoder function before forwarding the coded bit stream to the transmission processor 204 for transmission.

As a decoder, pixel processor 206 will retrieve these frame difference bit streams 442 from the transmission processor 204 first in, first out buffer 706, apply the decoding procedures, and then communicate with the transform processor 210 through its input first in, first out buffer 707. Transform processor 210 will perform the inverse DCT (discrete cosine transform) operation 485 to derive the pixel domain values for each Y, U and V block 471. These pixel values will be stored in the transform processor output first in, first out 710 until the pixel processor 206 retrieves the old pixel block from frame memory 214. The signal differential will then be forwarded to the pixel processor to update the new values of Y, U and V.

Transform processor 210 also performs matrix transposition 736, two-dimensional filter 738, matrix multiplication 740 and matrix addition 742. These are required since whenever motion compensation techniques are applied, the old frame 714 must be filtered before it can be added to the new frame difference 442. Additionally, the Inverse (Discrete Cosine Transform) 485 output must be transposed

before final addition. The double buffered input 707 and output 710 first in, first out memories and the input multiplexer 716 are employed to allow the four stage pipeline required for the discrete cosine transform operation. Additional speed may be obtained through the use of additional transform pipeline processor 744 arranged in parallel.

Referring to FIG. 8, as background to Applicant's scalable memory array reconfigurable technique to be described hereafter, an understanding of the CIF format 302 and QCIF format 304 is necessary. These formats are designed for the transportation of video information over a telecommunication network. They are commonly applied by international coding algorithms such as CCITT H.261 238 and MPEG 240 standards.

The CIF format 302 consists of 352 pixels for each horizontal scan line with 288 scan lines on the vertical dimension. The CIF format 302 is further partitioned into twelve groups of blocks 482. Each group of block consists of 33 macro blocks 477 and each macro block consists of 4 Y blocks 474, 1 U block 473 and 1 V block 473 and each block consists of 64 8-bit pixels.

The QCIF format 304 consists of 176 pixels for each horizontal scan line with 144 scan lines on the vertical dimension. The QCIF format 304 is further partitioned into three groups of blocks 482, each group of block 410 consisting of 33 macro blocks 477 with each macro block consisting of 4 Y blocks 474, 1 U block 473 and 1 V block 473.

Each macro block 477 comprises 384 bytes of YUV data since the frame rate for CIF format 302 is 30 fps (frame per second) and each CIF format 302 frame consists of 396 macro blocks. The band width required to send uncompressed CIF format 149 frames would be 4.6 mega bytes per second which is the equivalent to a total of 576 channels of 64 Kbs B channels.

Each QCIF format 304 has 99 macro blocks 477 and frame updates at 7.5 fps. The system throughput requires 288 Kbs which is the equivalent of 36 channels of 64 KBs based B channels 802. Therefore, an uncompressed CIF format 302 frame transmitting at 30 fps requires 24 T1 lease lines 804 and the QCIF format 304 transmitting at 7.5 fps requires 1.5 T1 lines 804. As such, 75 micro seconds would be required to code an incoming CIF format 304, 1.2 milliseconds would be required for each macro block at 7.5 fps.

The CCITT H.261 standard 238 requires a switch from inter to intra frame mode after every 132 frames of transmission in order to avoid accumulative error. This means that in a 30 fps transmission, every 4.4 seconds intra CIF format 302 frame coding will be engaged and in QCIF format 304, at 7.5 fps, intra frame coding will be engaged every 17.6 seconds.

FIG. 9 is a schematic illustration of the scalable memory array reconfigurable technique utilized by Applicant's multimedia assembly 112 in order to optimize the performance for encoding CIF format 302. To achieve 30 fps updates, the time required to encode a macro block 404 is 75 microseconds. A single 8x8 DCT operation will consume 6.4 microseconds. Since it takes 6 DCT operations to complete each 4Y:U:V block within a macro block 477, the time required for a single hardware device to execute DCT transform coding will take 38.4 microseconds which would mean that there would only be 36.6 microseconds left for other time demanding tasks such as motion estimation, variable length coding and quantization.

Although pipeline 902 and parallel processing 904 techniques can be applied to improve system performance such

as multiple DCT transform pipeline processors 744 can be cascaded in parallel as shown in FIG. 7, this solution is not acceptable for the consumer based mass market.

The scalable memory array reconfigurable technique reduces the standard CIF format 302 to a modified CIF format 906 with slightly coarser resolution and yet retain all of the integrity of the standard CIF format 302 and QCIF format 304. The scalable memory array has the option to choose between the CIF format 302 or QCIF format 304.

The modified CIF format 906 provides a 288h×192v resolution 908 and the modified QCIF format 907 provides a 144h×96v resolution 910. This provides close to the original CIF and QCIF 302 and 304 quality respectively and also maintains the 4:1:1 integrity of the YUV signal 471. Each CIF format 302 will still retain twelve (12) groups of blocks 482 and each QCIF format 151 will still maintain three (3) groups of block 482. The macro blocks 477 and pixel 912 format will remain the same. The only difference is that each group of block 482 will now consist of 18 macro blocks (9h×2v) while the original CIF format 302 group of blocks consisted of 33 macro blocks (11h×3v).

This is accomplished during the input and output color conversion process in that CCIR 601 image 916 input which consists of 720h×480v resolution can be downsampled (5:2) 918 to the 288h×192v Y resolution and further downsampled 5:1 920 to the 144h×96v U, V resolution. At the output display, the Y, U, V can perform 2:5 upsampling 922 for the Y and 1:5 upsampling 924 for the U and V. The significance of this modified CIF format 908 design is that the internal processing performance requirement is reduced by 46% which means we are now allowed to use slower and more economical hardware for encoder processing. Meanwhile, memory subsystems, such as frame memory 214 and first-in, first-out memory 428, can employ slower memory devices that reduce costs.

Secondly, scalable memory array 926 permits the further scaling down of our modified CIF format 908 to meet either application requirements or cost production requirements or to simply drop from a higher resolution format to a coarser resolution format to meet the real time and coding requirement. As an example, the CIF frame format could be implemented at 144h×96v resolution and a QCIF frame format in 72h×48v resolution. Consequently, the multimedia assembly 112 can employ the standard CIF format 302 or QCIF format 304 when cost and performance are acceptable. In other instances, the scalable memory array 926 would be adopted so that the CIF and QCIF formats would be adapted as per the following frame selection examples.

Mode	CIF	QCIF	TYPE
1	352h × 288v	176h × 144v	Standard
2	288h × 192v	144h × 96v	Modified
3	144h × 96v	72h × 48v	Modified
4	72h × 48v	36h × 24v	Modified
5	36h × 24v	18h × 12v	Modified

The scalable memory array also allows the partition of frame memory 214 into sections of modified frames to allow multiple processes to run in each frame section. As an example, a frame memory 214 of 352h×288v size can be scaled down to either a single 288h×192v section; 4 144h×96v sections; 16 72h×48v sections; 64 36×24v sections or any of the mixed combinations, all of the sections being processed in parallel.

The scalable memory array can also provide remote MPEG 240 video playback. Standard MPEG provides four times the resolution improvement over the existing CCIR

601 standard. Namely, the standard MPEG 188 can provide 1440h×960v resolution. The significance is now we are not only able to run each memory section as a parallel process, but we are also able to provide compatibility between the two standards MPEG 240 and H.261 238. Now, the MPEG standard 240 designed originally only to provide high resolution motion video playback locally can now be used to transmit compressed MPEG programs across the network employing the widely available H.261 video codec facilities. The scalable memory array also enables the user to manage and provide the remote transmission of MPEG 240 video programs employing conference controller 928, store and forward 930 and video distribution 932.

It is therefore possible to either downsample a compressed MPEG frame 240 into one of the modified CIF format 908 or simply send multiple compressed MPEG subframes by partition. For example, a 1440h×960v MPEG frame 240 can downsample 5:1 into a 288h×192v modified CIF frame 908 for transmission and decode and upsample at 1:5 to display it at standard MPEG resolution at the corresponding output.

As an example, the following frame formats could be utilized to interchange between H.261 238 and MPEG 240 standards.

Mode	MPEG	Q-MPEG	TYPE
1	1440h × 960v	720h × 480v	Standard MPEG
2	1152h × 768v	576h × 384v	Modified MPEG
3	576h × 384v	288h × 192v	Modified MPEG
4	352h × 288v	176h × 144v	Standard CIF/MPEG
5	288h × 192v	144h × 96v	Modified CIF/MPEG
6	144h × 96v	72h × 48v	Modified CIF/MPEG
7	72h × 48v	36h × 24v	Modified CIF/MPEG
8	36h × 24v	18h × 12v	Modified CIF/MPEG

The scalable memory array formats have significance in that due to their compact size, they become useful in representing moving objects in the foreground when the background information is still. The background information 40 would be pretransmitted during the intra frame coding mode 936, while the different moving objects would be transmitted during the interframe coding mode 938. Depending upon the size of the moving object, the appropriate size of the modified format will be employed. At the 45 decoder end, the moving objects will be overlaid with the still background context to provide motion sequence.

The scalable memory array is particularly suitable to progressive encoding of images when band width needs to be conserved. The scalable memory array will choose the 50 coarser modified CIF format to transmit the initial frames and then utilize a larger modified CIF format to send subsequent frames such that the complete image sequence will gradually be upgraded to the original CIF quality.

The scalable memory array controller performs as a result 55 of the cooperation between pixel processor 206 and host processor 218. Pixel processor 206 is the local host controller for the video codec and display subsystem 702 and the host processor 218 is the global host controller for the overall system. The pixel processor 206 serves as the bus master for video bus 422 and host processor 218 serves as the bus master for the system bus 418. Both the video bus 422 and the system bus 418 are system-wide parallel interconnects. Video bus 422 is specifically designed to facilitate the high speed video information transfer among subsystem components.

FIG. 10 illustrates the Pixel processor 206 designing to meet the flexible performance for various types of popular

video coding algorithms such as the MPEG, H.261 or JPEG. Meanwhile, pixel processor 206 can also perform other pixel domain-based proprietary methods. While most pixel algorithms are either inter 936 or intra 938 frame coding, the CCITT and ISO standard algorithms (MPEG, JPEG and H.261) are transformed domain coding methods employing fast DCT implementation and inter frame differencing techniques. Additionally, MPEG and H.261 also apply motion compensation techniques.

The pixel processor 206 is equipped with a 24 bit address line 1002 to permit it to access 16 mega bytes of program memory. The program memory can further be partitioned into separate segments with each segment designated for a specific coding algorithm. Since pixel processor 306 is micro-programmable, it is relatively easy to update the changes while MPEG 240, H.261 238 and JPEG 244 standards are still evolving.

The pixel processor 206 is also designed with parallel processing in mind. The micro programmable architecture allows multiple pixel processors 206 to couple over video bus 420 to provide concurrent program execution for an extremely high throughput. This will allow each pixel processor 206 to be dedicated to a coder 1008 function or a decoder 1010 function. If 6 pixel processors 206 are employed, this will allow the concurrent execution of an entire macro block 477. Similarly, the multiplicity of pixel processors depending upon cost and size could permit the process of an entire group of block 482 simultaneously.

The choice of host processor 218 is somewhat critical in that it must be able to provide an interface with the external host 1006, it must be able to execute the popular DOS 491 or UNIX program 490 such as word processing or spread sheet programs and it must be economical. A suggested choice is intel 80286 or 80386 microprocessors. These provide a convenient bus interface with the AT bus which has sufficient bus band width to be used as the system bus 418 of the system. The aforesaid micro-processors also provide compatibility with a wide variety of DOS 491 based software application programs. Additionally, the small computer system interface 488 is readily available and capable of providing high speed interface between the internal system bus and the external host 1006.

FIG. 11 is a schematic illustration of motion processor 208 subsystems. Conforming to one of the H.261 coding options, motion processor 208 is designed to identify and specify a motion vector 1102 for each macro block 477 within the existing luminance (Y) frame 474. The motion vector 1102 for the color difference for (U, V) frames 473 can then be derived as either 50% or the truncated integer value of the Y frame. The principle is that for each 16h x 16v source macro block 1108, the surrounding 48h x 48v area 1106 of updated new frame 712 will be needed to be searched and compared. The new macro block 477 having the least distortion will be identified as the destination macro block 1104 and the distance between the source and destination macro block will be defined as the motion vector 1102.

The direct implementation of motion processor 208 requires that for each of the four blocks 1109 residing within the old source macro block 1108 of the existing frame, the corresponding destination macro block 1104 centered within the new frame must be identified. Therefore, every corresponding, surrounding 6h x 6v area 1106 of blocks in the new frame must be searched and compared with the old macro block reference in order to derive the best match with least distortion. This approach will require 589, 824 cycles of search and compare operations. Provided the search and

compare operations can be fully pipelined, an instruction cycle time of 0.13 nano seconds is still required which is too time-consuming for the 75 microsecond per macro block real time requirement at 30 fps updates.

In order to meet such real time performance requirements, the motion processor 208 must employ parallel processing and multi-processing techniques. The multimedia assembly 112 incorporates a fine grain, tightly coupled, parallel pixel processor architecture 1112 which provides faster speed and better results. This is accomplished by partitioning existing macro block 477 into 4 8x8 blocks 1109. Four parallel processing arrays 1116 consisting of 24h x 24v processor elements are configured into nine (9) regions. These nine regions of macro processor elements 1114 are tightly coupled together. Each region of the existing frame can have direct interconnection and simultaneous access to its eight (8) nearest neighboring regions from the corresponding new frame. Each region of macro processing elements 1114 is designated to perform various types of pixel domain processing functions for the 8x8 block extracted from the old source macro block 1108.

FIG. 11 illustrates a parallel search method for 8x8 blocks residing within the old source macro block 1108. Each can conduct simultaneous match and compare operations with all of their nine nearest neighboring blocks. The outputs of the nine matching operations are first locally stored at the corresponding regional pixel processor arrays 1116. They are then shifted out and summed at the output accumulator 1118 and adder circuits 1120. The results are then compared using the comparator circuit 1122 to obtain the best match. The physical distance between the new macro block which results in the best match and the old reference macro block will be applied as the motion vector for the old luminance macro block.

The regional pixel processor array 1116 can be reconfigurable and is designed based upon nine banks of processor element arrays 1126. Each processor element array 882 consists of sixty-four processor elements 1128. The nine banks of processor element arrays 1126 are interconnected through shift registers 1130 and switches 1132. In a three-dimensional implementation, a vertically-cascaded processor array 1138 crossbar switch array 1134 and shift register array 1136 can be implemented. Additional layer such as storage array can be added to provide the additional functionality. This array will be extremely powerful when multi-layered packaging becomes available for the chip level modules and integrated circuit technologies.

A two-dimensional pixel processor array 1116 can also be designed using nine banks of processor element arrays 1126 equipped with peripheral switches 1132 and shift registers 1130. The switches 1132 can be reconfigurable to guide direction about the date of flow where the shift registers 1130 can transfer data from any processor element array 1126 or input to any other processor element array 1126 or output. Both switches 1132 and shift registers 1130 are byte wide to facilitate parallel data flow. The processor element arrays 1126 were designed based upon an 8x8 array of simple processor elements 1128.

The processor element arrays 1126 are designed for interconnection among the processor elements so that reconfiguration can be accomplished to meet different application needs. The processor elements 1128 are designed so that each can be programmed to execute simple instructions. Each processor element 1128 consists of a simple ALU 1140 which can execute simple instructions such as add, subtract, load, store, compare, etc.

FIG. 12A illustrates the design example of a programmable logic device 1201 which employs a cellular array

logic architecture. This figure is used to demonstrate the functionality and physical design of the device. The practical size for an $N \times N$ array is dependent upon the application requirements and the state of the art of the implementing technology.

FIG. 12B illustrates the practical implementation of a cellular logic processor element 1204 using a charge couple device 970 technology. The objective is to provide an integrated image sensor array 1206 with the digital preprocessing capabilities so that image coding for the macro blocks and pixel domain image coding functions can be performed. The other objective is to allow the implementation of on-chip parallel image sensing and parallel image processing 976 utilizing the same or compatible technology. The Cellular array logic architecture illustrated in FIG. 12B are useful that they can implement fine grain, tightly-coupled parallel processing systems. They employ single-instruction-multiple-data 1209 or multiple-instruction-multiple-data 1210 techniques to provide system throughput where traditional sequential computing fails.

Many cellular array processors have been designed in the past. Most of them employ a processor array which consists of a matrix of processor elements 1128 and switch arrays 1134 which can provide programmable interconnect networks among the processor elements. These cellular array processors are extremely expensive.

The design illustrated in FIG. 12B is based upon a much simpler architecture, the design being dedicated only to image processing and coding applications. The major objective is to meet real time performance requirements for macro block pixel domain processing functions or motion processing.

FIG. 12A is employed to demonstrate how frame differencing functions can be performed for each of the incoming sub-image macro blocks 477. For illustration, 3×3 array is used to represent macro block sub-image 477 which, from the current frame, is first shifted into the processor element; the corresponding macro block sub-image of the previous frame 1218 is then loaded into the processor element and the comparison functions are performed between the two macro blocks to detect if there is any frame difference. Provided the difference is larger than the preset threshold value, the macro blocks will be marked and the macro block marker 1242 and macro block difference 1244 between the two frames will be stored in frame memory 214. If there is no difference, the current frame macro block value 1216 will be deleted and the previous frame macro block value 1218 will be used for display updates.

If an excessive number of macro blocks 477 are identified with frame difference, then a scene or illumination change has occurred and macro block processor 1220 will notify host processor and pixel processor 206 and switch the operation from interframe coding 1227 to intraframe coding 1228. The significance is that while incoming images sensed from the camera, the specific macro blocks with the frame differencing can be identified and stored. Consequently, in the interframe coding modes 1227, only those macro blocks 477 requiring motion estimation and compensation 1222, transform coding 1229 or quantization 1226 will be marked and stored in the frame memory 214 to represent the image sequence of the current frame. In the case of scene or illumination changes, enough macro blocks will be detected with frame differencing that the system will automatically switch to intraframe coding mode 1228.

FIG. 12B illustrates additional pixel domain processing functions including low pass filtering 1230; high pass filtering 1232 and quantization 1226. The variable quantiza-

tion 1226 can be performed by presetting the threshold value 1234 and then shifting and quantizing the corresponding transform domain coefficients based upon the zig-zag scan format at each low, medium and high frequency regions. The threshold value can be reprogrammed to adjust the quantization level. The advantage is that as soon as the input image is detected, sampled and thresholded, several pixel domain preprocessing functions, such as frame differencing and motion estimation, can be performed right away. The differencing macro blocks will be sent to transform processor 210 to perform DCT operation 1224, the output of the DCT coefficients can further be reloaded into the processor element array to perform quantization. When band width reduction control 260 is required, initial thresholding is combined with a coarser quantization 1226 level to reduce the image resolution. When the system demands faster performance, multiple parallel processor element arrays can be cascaded to perform concurrent macro block operations such as frame differencing, motion processing and quantization.

The advantage of charge couple device technology 1202 is its suitability for image processing, multiplexing, and storage operations. This can be done both in the analog and digital domain. Therefore, depending upon the application requirement, both analog processing 1238, digital processing 1240 and memory functions using these processor element arrays 1126 can be accomplished.

FIG. 13 is a schematic illustration of the functional model architecture in order to simplify the functional processes covered out by the hardware previously discussed. The principal functional elements comprise a band width manager 1300, a formatter 1302, a pixel-domain-codec encoder 1304 coupled with a pixel-domain-codec decoder 1306, a transform-domain-codec encoder 1308 coupled with a transform-domain-codec decoder 1310, a network-domain-codec encoder 1312 coupled with a network-domain-codec decoder 1314 and a controller 1316.

The band width manager 1300 provides band width control capability wherein a two-dimensional band width-over-lay-lookup-table (BOLUT) can be constructed to map the specific band width ranges, i.e., 2.4 Kbs to 100 Mbs, et al., into selective options of media combinations such as overlay in the audio, video, text and graphics with various types of quality and resolution.

Additionally, during noisy communication environments, the band width manager 1300 function is to constantly monitor the network to detect abrupt network band width changes caused by local line degradation or network traffic congestion. The band width manager 1300 will respond by adjusting the media combinations to accommodate the available band width.

During stable communication environment, band width manager 1300 operates to reconfigure the different band widths specified by the network providing upgradability and parallelism for time-sharing.

The formatter 1302 communicates with the band width manager 1300 to ascertain the band width availability for incoming or outgoing signals. The formatter translates this external information into an internally-operating format. The scalable memory array reconfigurable technique will reconfigure the internal processor and frame memory structure pursuant to the directions of the formatter. This allows the external format to be translated into a suitable internal format to provide system compatibility. The scalable-memory-array-reconfigurable-technique (SMART) as discussed in FIG. 9 is capable of translating a programmable internal format in compliance with a wide variety of inter-

national standard and custom video coding algorithms such as MPEG, H.261, JPEG and vector quantization. Formatter 1302 identifies the transmitting or receiving coding algorithms, derives their specific format requirements and if these external format requirements are different from the current internal formats, the formatter reformats the horizontal and vertical resolution which results in a separate internal format which is compatible with the external format. These internal format operations, such as the reduction of the horizontal and vertical resolution, are performed by employing interpolation and downsampling techniques or upsampling techniques. The formatter 1302 also communicates with the frame memory so that the frame memory is aware of the internal format to be stored. This allows the formatter 1302 in conjunction with the scalable memory array configurable technique to formulate a scalable processor and frame memory architecture so that the internal processor and frame memory can be continually adjusted in order to reconfigure or modify a suitable internal format for any type of external format either being received or sent by the network-domain-codec 1314.

The network-domain-codec encoder 1312 and decoder 1314 are used to provide line coding and decoding functions. Network domain codec decoder 1314 would receive network transmissions via its front end transceiver 1320. It would then perform protocol procedures 1322, network communication procedures 1324, variable length coding 1326, run length coding 1328 and filtering 1330. The resultant transform coefficients and pixel data will then be forwarded to either pixel-domain-codec decoder 1306 or transform-domain-codec decoder 1310. The network-domain-codec encoder 1312 would receive encoded pixel data or transform coefficients from the other encoders and convert them into serial codes for network transmission performing functions similar to the network domain codec decoder 1314. Simultaneously, band width manager 1300 will interface with encoder 1312 and decoder 1314 to exchange protocol control and applications information regarding band width availability.

The pixel-domain-codec encoder 1304 and decoder 1306 are designed for custom coding algorithms such as vector quantization, pixel domain operations for the DCT transform based standard coding algorithms such as MPEG, et al, pixel domain operations for motion compensation and image post-processing functions and analysis and preprocessing techniques for video coding. Thus, the pixel-domain-codec provides for pixel domain preprocessing 1332, pixel domain coding 1334, image processing 1336, color space conversion 1338, pixel interpolation 1340, vector quantization 1342 and color lookup mapping 1344.

The transform-domain-codec encoder 1308 and decoder 1310 are specifically designed for forward and inverse transformation operations required by the international standard coding algorithms such as MPEG, et al. Transform-domain-codec encoder and decoder 1308 and 1310 also provide forward and inverse transform-based operations such as Hart transform and Hadamard transform. Additionally, generic matrix operations and post-matrix operations, such as scan conversion, quantization and normalization techniques, are performed by the transform-domain-codec.

The controller 1316 comprised of either a single or plurality of local host processors which manage the instruction sequencing and system control functions for data transfer, memory management, input/output interfacing and processor pipelining.

In FIG. 4, we demonstrated a host processor used to manage the communications pipeline, the network domain

codec and the system memory. It also performed general administrative tasks and controlled the system bus and access to other subsystem buses while communicating with the band width manager 1300.

5 A second controller is a single or plurality of pixel processors used to manage the video pipeline, the scalable memory array reconfigurable technique, frame memories, formatters and display processing. Additionally, the pixel processor is used to perform pixel-domain-codec encoding and decoding functions and can be used in multiples in order to facilitate macro block and group of block processing. Similarly, a single or plurality of transform processors can be employed as coprocessor for the pixel processors, in performing transform-domain-codec encoding and decoding functions.

10 All network transmissions or receiving functions would first pass through the network-domain-codec and then be directed to the pixel-domain-codec or transform-domain-codec after suitable formatting. The media information could then be displayed via the pixel-domain-codec decoder 1306. Origination signals from either storage, camera, TV or CD would be subjected to frame differencing 1364 and frame image capture 1366 before being encoded by pixel-domain-codec encoder 1304. These origination signals could then be transmitted via network-domain-codec, encoder 1312 dependent upon the band width manager 1300 and controller 1360 monitoring of band width availability.

15 While the invention has been described with reference to its preferred embodiment thereof, it will be appreciated by those of ordinary skill in the art that various changes can be made in the process and apparatus without departing from the basic spirit and scope of the invention.

I claim:

20 1. A controller apparatus for executing a plurality of control functions for communication of multimedia articles including voice, high quality audio, text, still image, motion video and animated graphics between multimedia equipment and communications networks, selectively providing receiving functions, retrieving functions, and transmitting functions, wherein said controller is compatible with multiple band widths and algorithmic coded signals, said controller providing a scalable architecture for communication of multimedia data, formatting from internal format to external format in compliance with any selective one of a plurality of international standardized and customized coded algorithms, and band width determination of available display band widths according to frame rate and available transmission band widths, said controller comprising:

25 means for receipt of an external network signal, said means comprising a network domain decoder; means for receipt of a local origination signal; and means for image processing of said origination signal for storage coding simulation, and transmission;

30 a first control means and format means for selectively formatting the format of said external network signal and local origination signal to a compatible first internal format in compliance with internal processing and memory capabilities;

35 means for decoding said external network signal according to said first internal format, said means selectively comprising a transform domain decoder alone and in combination with a pixel domain decoder;

40 a second control means and format means for selectively formatting said external network signal and said origination signal to a second internal format in compliance with a selective plurality of coding algorithms for

processing, storage and transmission, said means further comprising an encoding means which comprises a pixel domain encoder alone and in combination with a transform domain encoder for encoding said external network signal and said local origination signal; means for reconfiguring the memory means for selectively associating with said apparatus encoders and decoders for directing said first and second format means; band width management means, in communication with said second format means and said control means, for directing available run time transmission band widths and appropriate compression ratios for selectively formatting said second internal format to external transmission format in compliance with available transmission band width range, said band width management means continuously moderating and correcting said selective formatting of said second internal format to said second external transmission format based on transmission band width availability; means for transmission of said internally formatted external network signal and local origination signal according to said external transmission format, said means comprising a network domain encoder.

2. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein said network domain decoder for receipt of said external network signal selectively comprises a front and transceiver; protocol processor; network communications processor; variable length decoding processor; run length decoding processor; and filtering processor for sampling said external network signal, said network domain decoder in communication with said first control means and said format means to convert the horizontal and vertical resolution of said external network signal to an internally-defined file format size for reducing said internal real time video processing and frame memory updating requirements.

3. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein said second controlling means and said second formatting means, in communication with said network domain encoder and decoder selectively codes and decodes said incoming signal based upon the availability of customized and international standardized algorithms and selectively performs motion compensation processes and motion simulation processes to improve quality of said motion video article, said processes include pattern match, edge detection, image enhancement, color mapping and pixel interpolation of said external network and local origination signal.

4. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein external network signal is selectively transferred to said transform domain decoder and said pixel domain decoder for decoding; said transform domain decoder selectively providing denormalization, dequantization, scan conversion, matrix operation, inverse Haar transform, inverse Hadamard transform and inverse discrete cosine transforms on said external network signal and said pixel domain decoder selectively performing color mapping, vector dequantization, pixel extrapolation, color space conversion, image processing, pixel domain decoding, and pixel domain preprocessing on said external network signal for formatting of said external network signal and conversion to said first internal format for either storage processing, display or transmission.

5. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein said means for image preprocessing of said local origination signal comprises an integrated circuit subsystem further comprising:

means for performing integrated parallel sensing and storage wherein a plurality of input frames for said local origination signal can be sensitized, digitized and stored; and

means for performing detection of instantaneous scene changes wherein only the corresponding frame will be registered as intraframe, wherein all other frames will be registered as interframes, said detection means further comprising means for moderating the threshold level for proper determination of said scene changes; and

means for performing in analog and digital forms parallel image preprocessing for said interframes whereby each interframe image can be retrieved and compared to develop a plurality of corresponding frame differencing articles whereby only said frame differencing articles are required for further processing and encoding including motion estimation, discrete cosine transform, quantization, and huffman-like variable length coding.

6. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 5 wherein said means for image preprocessing for each said interframe further comprise a means for motion estimation, motion simulation and motion compensation operations on motion video articles comprising:

means to perform edge detection operations for each of said frame differencing articles wherein a selective plurality of detected edge articles are derived to identify said motion video articles during motion estimation and compensation operations;

means to perform feature extraction operations for each of said frame differencing articles wherein said extracted specific features for said frame differencing articles can identify from said motion video articles during said motion estimation process; and

means to perform forward, backward and random reference of selective interframes employing said selective features and said selective detected edges for said frame differencing articles.

7. A controller apparatus as set forth in claim 5 wherein said motion video articles include a plurality of moving foreground pixels overlaying can be referenced using transmission of a single or plurality of preceding intraframes wherein said small moving foreground pixels for subsequent plurality of interframes can be referenced using frame differencing techniques wherein each group of said moving foreground pixels are characterized employing said frame differencing of a plurality of said detected edges and a plurality of said extracted features.

8. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 7 wherein a motion video article can be applied with one or more pattern searching and recognition algorithms to derive alternative reference motion vectors wherein said motion vectors can forward, backward and random reference said motion video article during said interframe sequencing said motion vector can be represented by the interframe displacement of symbolic representation further comprising a plurality of detected edges, frame differences and extracted features for each corresponding motion video article, said symbolic representation and alternate motion vector can be applied for transmission simulation, coding, storage and processing of said motion video articles.

9. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 5, wherein said means for interframe image preprocessing further comprises parallel processor means for performing pixel level operations for an $n \times n$ pixel block sub-image, said means comprising an $m \times m$ array of said parallel processor

elements wherein n and m are integers and said parallel processor means can retrieve, decode and execute instructions for pixel input data from internal memory; and interconnection means for selective communication between each of said parallel processors whereby said pixel data inputs and incoming control messages can be received from said selected parallel processors and said pixel data outputs and outgoing messages can be broadcast to said selected parallel processing neighbors.

10. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 5 wherein said means for interframe image preprocessing further comprises a processor array configured as an $n \times n$ cellular logic array processor where n is typically of value in a range of between 8 and 32 wherein said cellular logic array processor can be employed to perform a plurality of block processing operations for said $n \times n$ pixel block of sub-image, said processor array further comprising:

a means for frame differencing between interframes wherein a group of $n \times n$ difference blocks are identified, registered and stored;

a means for template matching and article recognition operations for each of said $n \times n$ pixel blocks of said sub-image article extracting from said input image and comparing with selective $n \times n$ reference data stored previously in memory;

a means for determination of threshold level for selective matching said sections of said sub-image article to identify a motion vector article;

a means for motion estimation operation which can be applied to each of said $n \times n$ sub-image blocks for comparison between said previously-displayed frame article and said current frame article, said $n \times n$ sub-image performing matching functions at said frame differencing locations for generating horizontal and vertical distance for representing said motion vector;

a means for edge detection for each of said $n \times n$ blocks of said sub-image and means for edge enhancement for each of said decompressed image blocks prior to display, said edge detection for deriving said motion vector;

a means for feature extraction and comparison of said previously-displayed frame with said current frame;

Hadarmard transform means for each of said $n \times n$ blocks of said sub-image wherein each of said $n \times n$ blocks is represented by its pixel domain transform coefficient multiplied by the $n \times n$ Hadarmard coefficient matrix thereby reducing transmission band width through pixel domain band width compression; and

frequency domain transform means including discrete cosine transform means wherein each of an 8×8 frame differencing sub-image block can be multiplied by an 8×8 transform coefficient block to derive 8×8 blocks of frame differences identified by said frequency domain transform coefficients.

11. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein said second control means and second format means for selectively formatting said internal format further comprises a means for template matching pattern recognition and motion estimation and compensation, comprising:

means for extracting each of the $n \times n$ luminance pixel blocks from said previous reference interframe; and

means for performing template matching operation of said $n \times n$ reference block within a $m \times m$ window of surrounding pixel blocks residing in said current interframe wherein m and n are integers and m is greater

than n , said template matching generating a motion vector for said pixel block in the event of a match; means for determining and adjusting said $m \times m$ window size in the event of no match; means for performing pattern recognition on said adjusted $n \times n$ window sub-image.

12. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein said image preprocessing apparatus further comprises a means for identifying an estimating randomly-generated signal noise embedded within the input image article; and means for subtracting said randomly-generated signal noise from said original input image article by means of a first sensor and a second sensor, said first sensor sensitizing image and noise and said second sensor sensitizing noise for comparison of said sensors and subtraction of said noise signal.

13. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 10 wherein said article means for template matching further comprises:

means for retaining color representation of each significant object of said frame;

means for storing said color representation;

means for retrieving said color representation and performing pel domain transform operations;

means for converting said color representation from said pel domain to said frequency domain in order to perform additional frequency domain processing means such as discrete cosine transform and fast fourier transform.

14. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein said band width management means comprises a means for generating a network transmission request signal for the transmission band width requirement for outbound transmission multimedia articles;

means for receiving an acknowledgement signal from an extension network controller with respect to transmission band width requirement;

means for comparing said acknowledgement signal with said outbound transmission signal to determine sufficiency of transmission band width;

means for adjusting said outbound transmission signal to accommodate said band width availability;

means for compressing and decompressing said outbound transmission signal;

means for transmitting said outbound transmission signal;

means for continuous monitoring said outbound transmission and said band width availability and selectively adjusting said outbound transmission signal to conform to said availability of said band width during said transmission.

15. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein said means for selectively reconfiguring memory comprises:

means for definition of a default internal file format and size based upon coder processing and frame memory system throughput;

means for receipt of an external algorithmic coded signal during network inbound stage, said means comprising a network domain decoder;

means for receipt of a local origination signal, said means comprising a capture processor;

means for identifying and receiving article types and file size during said network inbound stage, said means comprising a host processor and its interface to said capture processor or said network decoder;

means for providing adequate downsampling ratio, wherein said receiving article can be conformed and reduced to said predefined internal file format and size; said means comprising a reconfiguration unit and a scaler circuit;

means for manipulation of said internal file articles, said means comprising an article-oriented instruction set, and means for storing retrieving, decoding, and executing said instruction set by said host processor and said pixel processor;

means for readjustment of said internal file format and size in conformance with band width availability, said means comprising a band width management unit in communication with said scaler circuit, reconfiguration unit and said host processor;

means for adjustment of said internal file format and size during interframe coding modes, wherein a plurality of motion video foreground articles can be specified to proper size, and wherein static background articles can be pretransmitted during intraframe coding modes, said means comprising a frame differencing circuit and motion processor interfaced with said pixel processor, and

means for providing upsampling ratio during transmission, wherein said transmitting article can be conformed and expanded to a selectively-desired file format and size, said means comprising said reconfiguration unit, and said scaler circuit interfaced with said band width management unit.

16. A controller apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein said first control means and second control means communicate across the network with external devices including pagers, remote control means and host computers for the selective exchange of command, data, status and control information with said external devices wherein said external devices perform selective multimedia applications for said controller, said communication means between said controlling means and said external devices comprising:

means for providing command layer protocol control functions in the form of predefined commands selectively interpreted by said control means;

means for updating and rearranging said predefined commands;

means for prioritizing said predefined commands;

means for providing transport layer protocol control functions;

means for data transfer and data tracking in cooperation with said command layer protocol; and

means for providing physical layer protocol control functions for implementation of initialization termination of mechanisms.

17. An apparatus for the adaptive continuous management and control of network traffic condition and band width availability for the communication of multimedia articles including voice, audio, text, still image, motion video and animated graphics between multimedia transmitter and receivers wherein said apparatus is compatible with multiple analog and digital transmission standards, such as analog voice grade line, PSDN, basic rate ISDN, primary rate ISDN/T1, LAN, and FDDI, the apparatus having a band width detection means determining available display band widths in accordance with frame rate and run time transmission band width, said apparatus comprising:

a means for generating a transmission request signal provided with message band width requirement for outbound multimedia articles;

a means for receiving a transmit acknowledge signal from a network controller and destination receiver indicating said band width availability;

a means for relaying a band width availability signal to a band width management unit for comparison of band width availability to transmission signal;

a means for generating an alternate compression ratio for said transmission signal compatible with said band width availability;

a means for implementing said alternate compression ratio through a host or encoding processor for further compression of said multimedia article to meet said band width availability;

a means for transmitting said multimedia article on said available band width; and

a means for monitoring said multimedia article transmission in said band width availability during transmission.

18. An apparatus for the continuous management and control of transmission band width availability in accordance with claim 17 wherein said means for generating said transmission request signal and said means for generating an alternative compression ratio further comprise:

a means for sensitizing outbound line condition changes whereby outbound transmission bit rate is adjusted to provide sufficient composition of said multimedia article groups, said means for sensitizing said outbound line condition comprising a selection of a plurality of quality levels for digitally-compressed audio articles; a selection of a plurality of quality levels for digitally-compressed motion video articles; a selection of a plurality of quality levels for digitally-compressed still images; a selection of a plurality of frame updating rates for digitally-compressed motion video articles; a selection of plurality of quality levels for digitally-coded animated bit mapped or vector graphics articles; and a selection of a plurality of options for composites of said digital, audio, image, video and animated graphics articles; and

a means for selectively monitoring and adjusting said rate requirements for said outbound multimedia articles.

19. An apparatus in accordance with claim 17 for the continuous management and control of said band width availability, said apparatus further comprising:

a plurality of predefined program sequences for a plurality of transmission line conditions whereby each of said program sequences comprises a specific group of multimedia articles, predefined for said transmission band width availability; and

a means to store said predefined program sequence and reference said predefined program sequence during line condition changes.

20. A method for the adaptive continuous management and control of network traffic condition and band width availability having a band width detection means determining available display band widths in accordance with frame rate and run time transmission band width, for the communication of multimedia articles including voice, audio, text, still image, motion video and animated graphics between multimedia transmitter and receivers whereby said apparatus is compatible with multiple analog and digital transmission standards such as analog voice grade line, PSDN, basic rate ISDN, primary rate ISDN/T1, LAN, and FDDI, the method comprising:

(a) generating a transmission request signal provided with message band width requirement for outbound multimedia articles;

- (b) receiving a transmit acknowledge signal from an external network controller and destination receiver indicating said band width availability;
- (c) relaying said band width availability to a band width management unit for comparison with band width of said outbound multimedia articles;
- (d) generating an alternative compression ratio for said outbound multimedia articles compatible with said available band width;
- (e) relaying said alternative compression ratio to a host or encoding processor for further compression of said outbound multimedia articles in conformance with said band width availability;
- (f) transmitting said outbound multimedia articles in conformance with said transmission band width availability;
- (g) monitoring said band width availability and said transmission of said outbound multimedia articles during said transmission;
- (h) generating alternative compression ratios during transmission to adapt to changes in said band width availability;
- (i) repeating steps (a) through (h) as required.

21. A scalable, reconfigurable memory apparatus for executing a plurality of preprocessing and post-processing functions for the communication and storage of multimedia articles including voice, audio, text, still image, motion video, and animated graphics between selective multimedia transmitters and receivers, said memory apparatus compatible with multiple standard or customized coding algorithmic signals including H.261, MPEG, JPEG, EDTV or HDTV, said apparatus comprising:

- means for definition of a default internal file format and size based upon coder processing and frame memory system throughput;
- means for receipt of an external network algorithmic coded signal, said means comprising a network domain decoder;
- means for receipt of a locally-originated signal, said means comprising a capture processor;
- means for identifying and receiving said multimedia article and file size, said means comprising a host processor selectively interfaced with said capture processor and network domain decoder;
- means for downsampling wherein said multimedia article can be conformed and reduced to a predetermined internal file format and size, said means comprising a reconfiguration unit and scaler circuit;
- means for manipulation of said internal file format, said means comprising said host processor and a pixel processor;
- means for adjustment of said internal file format and size to conform to band width availability, said means comprising a band width management unit in communication with said scaler circuit, said reconfiguration unit and said host processor;
- means for adjustment of said internal file format and size during interframe coding, wherein motion video foreground articles and still background articles are differentiated and separately transmitted, said means comprising a frame differencing circuit, and motion processor in interface with said pixel processor;
- means for providing upsampling during transmission wherein said transmission of said multimedia article

can be formatted and sized, said means comprising said reconfiguration unit, and said scaler circuit in interface with a band width management unit.

22. A scalable, reconfigurable memory apparatus for executing a plurality of preprocessing and post-processing functions for video coding in accordance with claim 21, further comprising:

an integrated parallel processor and storage array whereby a plurality of frames of said input image can be sensitized, digitized and stored;

a parallel image preprocessor array for performing real time image encoding operations, said preprocessor array including a frame differencing operation whereby during image encoding operations, said input images can be sensitized and compared to develop frame differencing articles whereby said frame differencing articles can be further processed for motion estimation, discrete cosine transform, quantization, and huffman variable length coding whereby said motion estimation and motion compensation operations comprise an edge detection operation for each of said frame differencing articles whereby a plurality of detected edge articles are derived to identify said motion video objects during said motion estimation and compensation operations; and

a feature extraction operation whereby extracted specific features for each of said frame differencing articles can be identified.

23. A scalable, reconfigurable memory apparatus for executing a plurality of preprocessing and post-processing functions in accordance with claim 22 wherein said input images comprise moving foreground pixels overlaying still image background pixels whereby said background pixels may be characterized singly during interframe coding, requiring single transmission, and said moving foreground pixels are detected utilizing said interframe differencing technique in said motion estimation and compensation technique whereby said parallel processor performs pixel level operations for an $n \times n$ pixel block sub-image, said parallel processor comprising an $m \times m$ array of parallel processor elements whereby n and m are integers of equal or unequal value.

24. A scalable, reconfigurable memory apparatus for executing a plurality of preprocessing and post-processing functions in accordance with claim 23 wherein said parallel processor elements can retrieve, decode and execute instructions for said pixel input data in its internal buffer or in neighboring parallel processor elements buffer, said pixel output data can be stored internally and in neighboring parallel processors in an interconnection means programming each of said parallel processors to a selective group of neighboring parallel processors whereby pixel data inputs and control messages can be received from said selected parallel processing neighbors and pixel data outputs and outgoing messages can be transmitted to said selected group of parallel processor neighbors.

25. A scalable, reconfigurable memory apparatus for executing a plurality of preprocessing and post-processing functions in accordance with claim 24 wherein said parallel processors can be arrayed and configured as an $n \times n$ cellular logic array processor wherein n is a value of between 8 and 32 and said cellular logic array processor can perform processing operations for said $n \times n$ pixel blocks of sub-images including said frame differencing operation between a current frame and a previously-displayed frame whereby a group of $n \times n$ differencing blocks are identified, registered and stored; template matching operations for each of said

$n \times n$ pixel blocks of sub-images, said template matching operation extracting an input image and comparing with a previously-stored input image thereby deriving a motion vector; pattern matching; motion estimation applied to each of said $n \times n$ sub-image blocks residing within said previously-displayed frame; edge detection for each of said $n \times n$ blocks; feature extraction; Hadamard transform for each of said $n \times n$ blocks of sub-images whereby each of said $n \times n$ blocks can be represented by a pixel domain transform coefficient and a Hadamard coefficient matrix; and a discrete cosine transform operation.

26. A scalable, reconfigurable memory array method for executing a plurality of preprocessing and post-processing functions for the communication and storage of multimedia articles including voice, high quality audio, text, still image, motion video and animated graphics between multimedia transmitters and receivers, whereby said method is compatible with multiple standard customized coding algorithmic signals including H.261, MPEG, JPEG, EDTV or HDTV, wherein said method provides a scalable architecture for communication of multimedia data, formatting from internal format to external format in compliance with any selective one of a plurality of international standardized and customized coded algorithms, and band width determination of available display band widths according to frame rate and available transmission band widths, said method comprises:

defining of a default internal file format and size based upon coder processing and frame memory system throughput;

selectively receiving an external network algorithmic coded signal and local origination signal;

identifying the multimedia article signal and size;

downsampling the received multimedia article to a pre-defined internal file format and size;

manipulating said internal file format to conform to transmission band width availability;

distinguishing between motion video foreground articles and still background articles during interframe coding and intraframe coding modes;

upsampling said internal file format to selectively desired format and size for transmission in accordance with transmission band width availability;

distinguishing between motion video foreground articles and still background articles during interframe coding and intraframe coding modes;

upsampling said internal file format to selectively desired format and size for transmission in accordance with transmission band width availability.

27. A scalable, reconfigurable memory array method in accordance with claim 26 wherein said method for manipulating said internal file format to conform to band width availability and distinguishing between motion video foreground articles and still background articles during interframe coding and intraframe coding modes further comprises:

differentiating between still image background pixels and moving foreground pixels;

performing frame differentiating techniques on an $n \times n$ pixel block sub-image by means of an $m \times m$ array of parallel processors whereby n and m are integers of equal or unequal value;

comparing current frame images to previous frame images and template matching said images;

deriving a motion vector for each of said frame differences;

performing pattern matching, motion estimation, edge detection, feature extraction and Hadamard transform, for each of said $n \times n$ blocks of sub-images;

representing each of said $n \times n$ blocks of sub-images by a pixel domain transform coefficient, Hadamard coefficient matrix and discrete cosine transform.

28. A method for the application of image preprocessing techniques for the interframe coding of multimedia articles including voice, audio, text, still image, motion video and animated graphics between multimedia transmitters and receivers, whereby said method can be integrated with an image capturer circuit and band width management circuit, said method comprising:

(a) capturing a local origination still image in accordance with frame update requirements established by a host processor;

(b) capturing and storing the complete image frame during the intraframe coding mode;

(c) comparing and differencing said present captured frame to a previous captured frame during the interframe coding mode;

(d) storing the frame differences between said present frame and said previous frame in blocks and macro blocks;

(e) registering and coding said frame differencing blocks or said frame differencing macro blocks into a frame differencing bit map;

(f) converting color space from analog RGB or NTSC format into a digital RGB or YUV format;

(g) retrieving the luminance macro blocks according to said frame differencing bit map;

(h) deriving the appropriate motion vector for each of said macro blocks through comparison and selection of the minimum distortion among adjacent macro blocks;

(i) reducing from an external file format to an internally-defined format in accordance with a downsampling ratio established by said host processor, the reconfiguration unit and the scaler;

(j) translating said frame differencing bit map to conform with said internally-defined format;

(k) performing pixel domain and transform domain coding operations for said frame differencing macro blocks for said Y, U and V format;

(l) enlarging from said internal file format to an external file format according to an appropriate downsampling ratio as established by said host processor, reconfiguration unit and scaler;

(m) adding said frame difference to said previous frame in order to display and update said current frame;

(n) repeating steps (a) through (m) as required;

(o) repeating steps (a) through (n) for live video sequence as required.

29. A method for the application of frame differencing techniques, pixel interpolation techniques and annealing techniques for the compensation of live motion video articles which may include voice, audio, text, still image and animated graphics, said motion compensation method provides a scalable architecture for communication of multimedia data, formatting from internal format to external format in compliance with any selective one of a plurality of international standardized and customized coded algorithms, and band width determination of available display band widths according to frame rate and available transmission band widths, said method comprising:

- (a) capturing the scene of a motion video article through frame differencing techniques;
- (b) representing the motion video profile of said motion video article in an article-oriented instruction set format;
- (c) defining said motion video profile of said motion video article by individual object and relative movement association;
- (d) augmenting said motion video profile of said motion video article by means of rotation, shifting and shuffling operations;
- (e) reformatting said motion video profile of said motion video article to an internal file format;
- (f) enlarging said motion video article by means of upsampling and reducing said motion video article by means of downsampling operations;
- (g) overlaying said motion video profile of said motion video article with said voice, audio, text, still image or said animated graphics to construct a complete multi-media presentation;
- (h) defining said motion video profile of said motion video article;
- (i) interpolating said motion video profile of said motion video article through regeneration of absent pixels to further refine said motion video article;
- (j) simulating said motion video profile of said motion video article through capturing and recording selective, nonconsecutive frame references;
- (k) annealing said motion video profile of said motion video article through reconstruction of said absent pixels, absent motion articles or absent frames, employing graphics animation techniques;
- (l) selectively repeating steps (a) through (k) as required.

30. A communication system assembly apparatus executing a plurality of control, processing, communication and interface functions for the communication and storage of multimedia articles including voice, audio, text, still image, motion video, and animated graphics between multimedia transmitters and receivers whereby said communication system is compatible with multiple standard or customized coding algorithmic signals such as H.261, MPEG, JPEG, EDTV or HDTV wherein multiple incompatible video coding equipment employing different video coding algorithms can communicate with each other, said communication system providing a scalable architecture for communication of multimedia data, formatting from internal format to external format in compliance with any selective one of a plurality of international standardized and customized coded algorithms, and band width determination of available display band widths according to frame rate and available transmission band widths, said communication system providing:

means for network communication processing, said means comprising a network domain decoder and network domain encoder, said means can provide control interface to a telecommunication network or microwave network, said means for network communication processing including receiving functions for serial compressed video bit stream;

means for transmission processing, said means comprising a formatter to transform between a CIF/QCIF format and selective CCITT H.261, MPEG or JPEG formats, said means providing conversion functions for serial to parallel and parallel to serial, said means

further comprising means to encode and decode header messages for H.261, JPEG and MPEG; means for host processing, said means providing a high speed interface between said communication assembly and an external host, said means further providing a system independent communication between said controller assembly and said external host for the exchange sequence of command and data messages, said host means further providing windowing operations permitting the system memory to be memory mapped into a frame memory whereby said host processor can view frame memory status and operations in real time; means for system host bus, said bus means permitting said host processor to control access and communicate with network communication processors, transmission processors, pixel processors and frame memory; means for a communication pipelining subsystem, said means providing real time frame formatting, protocol controlling transmission and receiving; means for pixel processing, said means comprising a bus controller and frame memory controller wherein said pixel processing means serves as a bus master for a video bus wherein said pixel processing means can access frame video memory for pixel level operations, said means further comprising bit level manipulation capabilities for variable length coding and decoding, scan formatting conversion and quantization; means for display processing, said means for display processing performing digital YUV to digital RGB conversion, digital RGB to analog RGB conversion, digital RGB to VGA conversion and analog RGB to NTSC conversion; means for capture processing, said means for capture processing permitting decoding of analog video input formats into CCIR 601, said means for capture processing further decoding said CCIR 601 into CIF formulated YUV signals; means for frame storage, said means for frame storage comprising a twin memory access storage for previous frames and current frames according to a formulated CIF format in order to facilitate frame differencing operations; means for motion processing, said means for motion processing including a means for loading luminance signal in frame memory for performing motion estimation and generating a motion vector for each block of storage in frame memory; means for transform processing, said means for transform processing comparing the differences between the previous and the present current blocks or macro blocks and coding said differences in discrete cosine transform coefficients; means for video bus, said means for video bus providing a high speed, bi-directional, parallel interconnect between said frame memory, said capture processor, said display processor, said transform processor, said pixel processor and said motion processor; and means for video subsystem pipelining, said means comprising system-wide direct interconnection between said capture processor, said pixel processor, said motion processor, said transform processor, said frame memory and said display processor.

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